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VIDEO GUIDE

ISSUE 7

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**TODD
HAYNES:**

FROM

KAREN

CARPENTER

TO

POISON



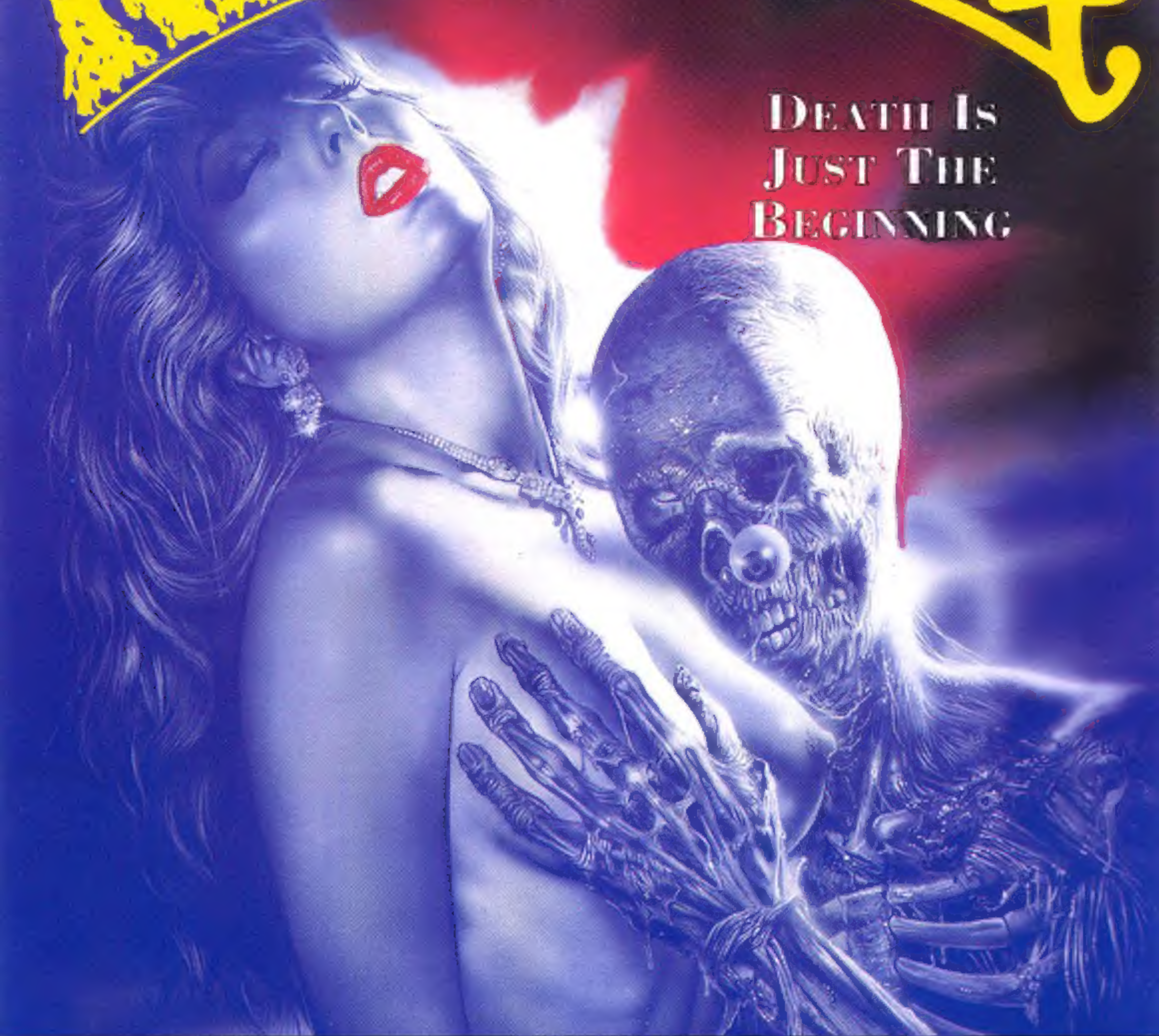
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COVER

TODD HAYNES gets up close and
personal to The Carpenters

PHOTO: CAMDEN MORSE

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BANNED FILMS ISSUE

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FTV07



FROM ONE SLIME TO ANOTHER

Film Threat—

Talkin about scammers and rip off guys, let's salute Mr. (I Have To Live At Home With My Mother) Don Farmer. This guy should be killed—when will it be done? I fully agree with all the letters sent in that I've read about the schmuck. But instead of just talking about it everyone out there should contact the authorities regarding this guy. I personally made a movie with this guy called "Invasion of the Scream Queens" and A) I haven't seen any money on it at all and B) the guy doesn't credit my name on the video box. If it's not a Jorg Buttgeroit film, it's Alejandro Jowdrowsky, or Fellini this guy's bootlegging. Even people out of the country send him checks and never even get their tapes. If you're lucky, you'll get a 20th generation copy on a cheap Samsung tape from him. I called this lonely fuck in Tennessee to tell him off and he always has an excuse whether blaming his innocent old mother for not shipping his packages or some other story. I'll charter a plane for everybody out there for a free trip to Tennessee for the making of our own snuff film starring yours truly, Don Farmer.

It'll slowly creep up to this slimy fuck,

Stuart Wall

Stuart,

You have a lot of pent up anger—why don't you release it? (For more information about Mr. Wall, see the review for his video *Hellroller* in this issue. It should be also noted that his letter had to be typeset due to his poor penmanship.)

PORN, ITALIAN STYLE II

Please print this letter as quietly as possible because, like Geo H. (of FTVG #6), I also think that the Italian "actress" Moanna Possi is just lovely. Unfortunately for Geo, hailing as it appears he does, from the southland, does not know that wherever there is a reasonably large population of Italian speaking people there will also be a video store either specializing in Italian language videos or will at least devote a section of the store to them. Like in Boston's North End for instance. I don't know about porn, but there are at least two semi-hard soft-core videos at one of these store which feature Ms. Possi. I wish, for Geo's sake, that I could remember their names but they were in Italian, which I don't speak or read and so all I cared about was that the video jacket sported her name. My advice to Geo is—find Italians, find a video store in the neighborhood, find Moanna Possi. Of course if he finds such a store he'll feel like an idiot walking into it so just tell the truth. Say you're learning to speak Italian and you expect watching Italian language films will improve your comprehension, but (cough) you're especially interested in somebody by the name of Moanna Possi's diction.

Boston, MA

E.H., Find a life.

FIVE REASONS WHY HE READS FTVG

I have just picked up issues number three and four and wanted to say how impressed I was. I had seen issue three on the shelf of the video store for awhile but I never bothered to give it a look. I figured you were some spatter-worshipping-Fango-wannabe-clone that was riding the NEKRO wave. Mind you, I'm not really against gore worshippers but I was wrong about your mag.

I was pleasantly surprised to finally see a widely distributed mag...

1. not kiss anyone who makes a flicks greasy ass
2. cater to the obscure video
3. Spend time on content instead of worrying about the pure visuals
4. not interview some big-budget has-been like Wes Craven who keeps promising his next flicks gonna be a spooker
5. have a rotted corpse grab a chick's tits on your cover

Thank you for your time
and all the best in the future,

Craig C. Venning
Fort Perry, ON

Craig,
Thanks for kissing OUR
collective greasy ass.

COLLEGE PAL ON THE ROCKS

Dear David,

Sorry to take so long to write you about the great magazine you are running. It's just that I held off from reading it for the same reason that I won't go see Spike Lee films—I naturally resent any success by a fellow film school graduate. See, while you have spent the past three years drinking expensive bottled water by the pool at the Beverly Hills Hotel, driving the only Jaguar pick-up in Southern California and having late-night power meals at the Oki-Dog on Sunset Boulevard, I have spent the last nineteen months working as a bill collector.

But don't feel sorry for me old pal. No, I enjoy earning slightly more than minimum wage making cappuccinos for yuppie scum, living in an actual ghetto in Oakland, drinking progressively cheaper brands of whiskey, and making intensely personal films about the tragedy of existence.

Have a nice day buddy.

David Kastle

P.S. Have you considered running a Personals column in the Guide Classified section?
P.P.S. Don't you owe me money?

Dave,

I'm happy to hear that my peers are doing well—you're probably making more money than I do—but remember this helpful hint on making those "intensely personal" films: Ditch the whisky and go directly to crack—you don't have any time to waste! So far as any money is concerned, I suggest you go back to our alma mater and get some of your tuition refunded—they obviously didn't do their job.

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IMPERSONAL?

Hollywood Book and Poster Co.
PO Box 539
Hollywood, CA 90078

Dear Mr. Gore and Mr. Williams,

We always have carried Film Threat magazine. At one time I was going to stop carrying it but changed my mind. I was getting real upset with the non-stop assault editorials on Chas. Balun—The Grizzly Adams of Goredom. He made a mistake, he apologized and there continued in your magazine a seemingly endless tirade against Chas. I felt enough is enough. Chas. is a good friend and you just never let up on him. I was just getting sick and tired of seeing him getting slammed every issue so I felt until you stopped this attack on Chas.' good name, I wouldn't carry your magazine any more. Due to outside pressure, I changed my position and carried your magazine under protest. So there you have it. It's nothing personal. It was simply me defending a friend, which I'm sure you can understand.

Take care,

Eric Caiden

Eric,
When you decide to not carry a product in your store because of a "friend", the decision is personal. As far as Chas.' defense, saying that he didn't make money on bootleg NEKRO sales is like me saying, "I stole your car, but I only drove it a few miles." When you're wrong, you're wrong.

MUTANT MAIL

Sean Wipfli
108 S. Broom
Madison, WI



Hope things are going well there.

Thanks + ~~Back~~cores

Seu

WHAT RETURN POLICY?

David E. Williams
Film Threat Magazine

Re: "Glitter Goddess of the Sunset Strip"

Dear Mr. Williams,

I have been advised that my client, Llana Lloyd, has asked you on several occasions to please return the screener tape of "Glitter Goddess of the Sunset Strip". As you know and as I am informed, this tape was provided for movie review purposes and it was labeled "For Viewing Purposes Only".

Ms. Lloyd is anxious to receive the above-mentioned materials which I trust you have not duplicated, extracted from or otherwise disseminated. Please return the materials directly to her or this office.

Thank you for your immediate attention.

Sincerely,

Leslie F. Bell
Attorney-at-Law

LFB

cc: Llana Lloyd

Llana,
We DO NOT regularly return tapes submitted for review—especially to paranoid whiners who cry to their lawyers. Next time, try an SASE or, better yet, don't fucking send it in the first place.

RENT OR NOT TO RENT?

Dear Sirs:

I have insatiable appetite for films ^{video} and a limited budget. I want to know if it is possible to rent some of the films reviewed/advertized in your magazine rather than buy them. Roger Ebert says that this may be the only way those of us living in "backwater" towns may get any culture.

Sincerely,

James,
Three options: (1) SAVE YOUR MONEY; (2) MOVE; (3) BECOME FRIENDS WITH ROGER EBERT (and learn to spell his name before sending off that initial plea for help).

PORN III & MORE

FTVG:

For the reader in the last issue wondering about international porn, may I suggest the North Beach Cinema on Kearney street in San Francisco. They feature a wide array of German and Japanese videos as well as other European countries. A warning however: These videos are expensive and about as hard core as they come over the counter. Shit, piss, fisting of all orifices—sometimes simultaneously, B&D, S&M, piercing wherever a forefinger and thumb's worth of skin can be pinched.

For the other reader who asked if snuff films are real and where to get them, Gunther Ruethbach(er) (I'm not sure of the spelling)—a CIA spook in prison on trumped-up charges has reported that the producers of kiddie porn routinely kill their captives on video when they are too old to pass for children and that the government seeks out these producers through various means and kills them with extreme prejudice in order to keep the public ignorant of just how wide spread this industry is. Needless to say, if these videos do exist, they are illegal to own and probably have very bad production values.

SMARTY

Smarty,
Your information and insight is greatly appreciated, but I have to wonder why. However, further comments on these topics are encouraged. (YOU SICK LITTLE MONKEY!)

CAN'T WE ALL JUST GET ALONG?



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THE SOLE SURVIVOR

IF YOU HAVE A FILM and are looking for a distributor, YOU WILL GET SCREWED. Curiously though, even if you ARE a distributor, YOU CAN STILL GET SCREWED.

In the two years since FILM THREAT VIDEO began selling films, many obstacles have been faced and pushed aside—unscrupulous retailers, deadbeat buyers and bootleggers to name a few. But the worst demons we've fought have to be other distributors. Several have recently gone into bankruptcy, sucking down the filmmakers unlucky enough to have signed with them. More insidiously, others will get the rights to a film merely for the sake of stockpiling an impressive catalog. This results in countless videos shelved with no intention of ever being distributed. To make matters worse, these companies are unwilling to let anyone else handle the product, or will make consumers pay through the nose for a copy. There's no excuse when even *The Great Rock and Roll Swindle* is a mainstream release, but that's exactly why Steve Wang's incredible *Kung Fu Rascals* is no longer available through us—because of mismanagement and greed on the part of York Pictures. Although they, as

owners of the film, have every right to be stupid, it's at the expense of everyone who wants to see movies—people like you. Because York Pictures believed *Rascals* could be a "better" film, nearly \$20,000 was spent in hopelessly butchering Wang's original cut, leaving a 20 minutes shorter, incoherent mess that will retail at almost three times the original price when York puts it back on the market. Needless to say, *Rascals* will fall into oblivion until Wang becomes a big shot director. At which time EP copies on super thin tape will be available in K-Mart bargain bins everywhere.

York rejected our request to offer an uncut version, so if you bought a copy from us over the last few months, you've got a rare collector's item. For anyone presently looking for a copy—good luck. Like many of the other films mentioned in this Banned Films issue, *Rascals* has been hamstrung by a distributor unwilling to understand the video market.

After the smoke and rubble of the *Rascals* fiasco cleared, there did emerge a sole survivor: Steve Wang. By shrewdly selling his film to York Pictures as opposed to relying on royalties, Steve managed to buy a house from the profits—proving to

any doubters that despite the odds it is possible to be a successful independent, no-money filmmaker.

After dealing with scum day in and day out in the shady world of magazine distribution, the unfortunate plight of *Rascals* is something we expected would happen, but most filmmakers will not. Instead, blinded by the prospect of actually making some money or at least getting their work seen by people outside their immediate family, they'll sign on the dotted line of a distribution contract that entitles them to .00005% of all net sales to Somalia.

Learn from our experience. Distrust any company or individual who promises the world, but pressures you to sign a ten page contract outlining in broad terms everything they aren't responsible for and explaining in minute detail the many loopholes that would allow them to stop paying you those quarterly 95¢ royalty checks. Distrust equally anyone who offers the same, but sealed only with a handshake.

A bedraggled, walking disaster,

David E. Williams
Editor-in-Chief

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SCAN

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DEATH MAGIC

93m n/Video

The Domino Theatre



What a surprise! A movie with a title as cheesy as *Death Magic* and it's not that bad. While not exactly a masterpiece, I did manage to stay awake for the whole 90 plus minutes (which is more than any of my roommates could do). The movie concerns itself with five (but very soon three) young magicians who accidentally unleash the ghost of a psychotic Major who was hung back in 1875. When the major proves to be uncontrollable and escapes, it's up to the trio—with the later aid of their mentor—to stop this crazed Confederate killing machine. While the story is ambitious and imaginative, director Paul Cline probably should have spent a little more time doing some pre-production work. A couple of the film's "major" flaws could have been erased that way. The actors, ("from the burgeoning Tucson theatre world," no less), while not all bad, left a lot to be desired. The film's lighting could have been done a little better too. I know shadows create a scary

mood, but you have to at least be able to see something! The film's unhappy ending was what pushed *Death Magic* over the mediocre hump, insuring a decent rating. Overall, this was a pretty good movie: A step away from being shitty, but at the same time a step away from being great. Well, maybe a couple steps away from being great.

—Mike Long

BOUGHT AND SOLD

76mm/Video

Michael DiPaolo Prods



This is an incredibly ambitious, but altogether depressing look at big city seediness. A young girl leaves home, tired of the sexual abuse from her father, only to encounter abuse of a different nature from the likes of street people and the darker side of fate. I liked the biting realism of the story and the Paul Schrader-like screenplay, but didn't particularly care for the occasionally over-long sequences. All in all, it's a pretty solid drama and a noble attempt at creating a story that works on video.

Tom Brown



DEATH MAGIC: Good and cheesy fun



Drillbit, the post-apocalyptic Limey bad ass.

BAD KARMA

6
& **DRILLBIT**

31 & 35min/Video
Shops Shifting Films

[NOTE: Since I've worked on a few F/X related films, the FTVG editors have dubbed me effects expert in residence I have reluctantly accepted the title.]

"They'll suck your corpse" screams the cover of *Bad Karma*, an ultra-bloody video from England—and that they will. A clutch of Krishnas crash Dave Jackson's birthday bash, shape shifting into ravaging mutants bent on destruction. Dismemberment and disembowelment follow suit as the sadistic sect pursues Dave to an S&M parlor where scantily dressed vixens battle the mutating Krishnas. The already confusing mess becomes less coherent when (out of nowhere) a bunch of "spiritual redneck zombie killers" show up to save the day. The tobacco spittin', cousin-marryin' hillbillies parody we full-blooded Americans, but it's all in fun. (I think...) Anyhow, the video is highly watchable, except for a couple of gross sexual mutilation scenes that kinda dulled my appetite, so non-gore-hounds take note. Them

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bloody Limeys sure know how to make gore less appealing than it already is.

Drillbit's title character, according to the video jacket, 'is the anti-hero in a brutal AIDS-ridden future.' His nickname appropriately comes from the drill bit lodged in his brain, distorting his young mind—creating a teenage, angst-driven vigilante determined to destroy earth's

growing mutant population Sounds exciting? Well, it would be if it had a story to follow. This gorefest works only on one level, as a half-hour long trailer, 'cause that's what it is: self-described "hyper violent highlights from a proposed full-length (sic) film." With all the work involved they should have made a 40 minute story instead of just bits and pieces



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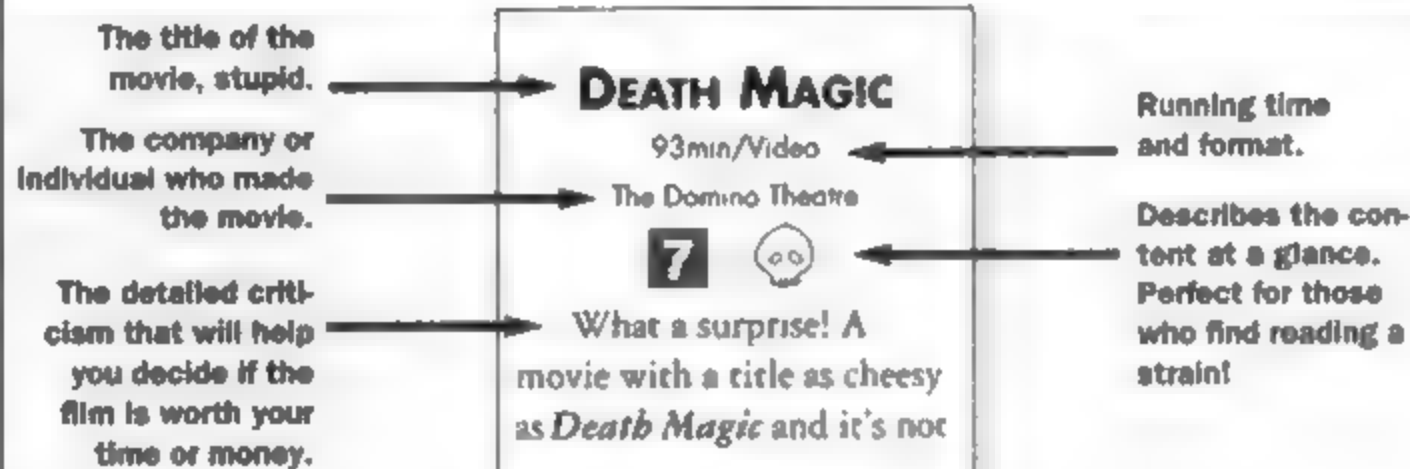
RATINGS

- 10** Perfect! A must for any collection and worth twice the price!
- 9** Excellent. Definitely worth seeing.
- 8** Great. We're jealous and wish we'd thought of it.
- 7** Very Good. Would get the filmmaker an "A" at U.C.L.A.
- 6** Good. But not "very good." Wait until you have extra cash.
- 5** A few good scenes, but only at the 7-Eleven security-cam level.
- 4** Dull. But interesting at scan speed.
- 3** Trance-inducing. Not interesting, even at scan speed.
- 2** Bad. You have a new blank tape.
- 1** Sucks! No explanation necessary.

CLASSIFICATIONS

No Budget	Horror	Action	Classic
Low Budget	Nudity	Subversive	Animated
Big Budget	Arty	Surreal	Sci-Fi
Comedy	Music	Documentary	Pop Culture
Drama	Music Video	Instructional	Compilation

READING OUR REVIEWS



Well, at least they warned us. Surprisingly, the quality is pretty decent (i.e., editing, lighting, et. al.) for a couple low-budget filmmaking blokes. Alex Chandon's direction of random acts of blood spurtin' violence keep the viewer entertained long enough until it goes on to the next random act of blood letting. The voice-over by Yank gore specialist Jim Van Bebber (*Roadkill*) is a cheesy, cheap way to fill in story gaps never shot, but the bloody effects by Duncan Jarman and Dominic Hailstone are satisfactory and the acting is competent. However, the Hi-8 production values and English accents reminded me of an ultraviolent *Dr. Who* episode.

—Chris O'Flaherty



Sukenick's low-rent BEAST.

ALIEN BEASTS

75min/Video

CJS Films



The latest from the goons who gave us *Mutant Massacre*, this "film" could be used as an argument to justify why we need film schools! If there was a plot, I have no idea what it was, which is surprising, considering that half the tape was some poorly read (probably ad-libbed) narration telling us exactly what was supposedly going on. I guess that since I didn't give a

damn after the first five minutes, it sorta hampered my attention span. The other half of the film that wasn't narration was either some stupid zillion hour fight scene shot from a single locked off camera position or any one of a number of scenes apparently designed to showcase Carl Sukenick's ultra-amateurish direction and special effect makeup skills. To the people who made this: Please, only take out your camcorders to videotape Junior's birthday parties and other such similar events.

—Merle Bertrand

JOURNEY INTO THE BEYOND

104 incredibly long minutes

16 & 35mm

VCI Home Entertainment



I'm the sort of guy who tells UFO abduction nuts that "Klaatu barada nikto" means "Squeal like a pig, boy!" and a chakra is "one of them places where if you hit it with a baseball bat, you die." So I was looking forward to some primo film entertainment when I got this tape. No such luck. This is a coma-inducing 15-year-old cheapie that would drive both Shirley McLaine and Uri Geller to suicide. The late John Carradine narrates (apparently, he was between Mexican *Dracula* films at the time) while our intrepid film crew documents obviously faked psychic surgery, ghostly manifestations and levitations—all of which are accompanied by an annoying tone on the soundtrack to help the more squeamish viewer know when to close their eyes when the blood starts to flow. Not to worry, you'll be singing "Springtime for Hitler" long before you get grossed out.

—Paul T. Riddell



CLARISSA X

8min/16mm/B&W

Motherland Prods



One of the hardest things about reading a short story is that you know it's a short story. Therefore, it's sometimes difficult to get to know the characters because you know that, since it's a short story, their tale is soon going to be over. Which means that the story had damned well better be good, fast, otherwise you won't stick around to get to know these new people or care about their situation. The same holds true for short films. Fortunately in *Clarissa X*, we do get drawn in quickly and are rewarded by seeing an old theme (boy meets girl) get handled in a unique way (she's dead). When I was going to film school, (yes, I admit it!), there were either conventional short subject films or music videos. In *Clarissa X*, we get to see an excellent example of how the old school of short filmmaking can be successfully and naturally integrated with the MTV style. The result is this stylized, *noir*-ishly hip half-narrative, half-music video telling of a mysterious relationship gone bad. Director Thomas Trail has a winner here—and casting famous brother/actor Ted Raimi in the lead didn't hurt.

—Merle Bertrand



Ted Raimi cuddles with his ghostly girl in *CLARISSA X*.



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Ferocious breasts in COLONY.

NUDIST COLONY OF THE DEAD

90min/Super 8

Film Threat Video

7

After *Curse of the Queerwolf*, what could Mark Pirro possibly do to top himself? That answer came blatantly apparent after only five minutes of viewing his latest Super 8 epic, *Nudist Colony of the Dead*. With material ranging from hopelessly silly to positively hysterical, *Nudist Colony* can best be described as a not-so-typical summer camp slasher-flick and a bad musical all rolled into one, not to mention a wickedly irreverent satire on Christian fundamentalism. The story concerns a group of young people literally forced by their God-fearing parents into attending a religious retreat organized by a fanatical minister of a rigid church—the same church that years earlier persuaded local officials to close down a nudist colony. The nudists protest Jonestown-style by downing a poison liquid as one old hag with tits sagging to her knees vows revenge, putting a curse on the camp and all zealots that attend it. Then, in *Living Dead* fashion, the nudist ghouls rise to mutilate the campers. Pirro just may be the funniest guy in the inde-

pendent low-budget film industry. With gags running the gamut from highly-questionable to simply perverse, Pirro's material is sure to offend almost anyone at least once. —T B

JESUSVILLE

23min/Video

Mike Trippedi Prods

2

Living in the "Buckle of the Bible Belt," I looked forward to this video, which promised "an off-the-wall spoof on religious fanatics and cults." Instead, I got a brain-dead home movie which made me want to watch Bob Tilton for three hours just to get the taste out of my mouth. Its subject offers unlimited possibilities for parody (look at the church of the SubGenius), but this tale, concerning a lonely guy who places a video personal ad looking for a nice Christian girl but gets involved with a cult that kidnaps local sinners and converts them to "Jeezus," is about as funny as a hot Clorox enema. Skip this sucker and catch something with a bit more imagination and entertainment value, like *Far and Away*. —Paul T. Riddell

CREATURES OF HABIT & CREATURES OF HABIT 2

28 & 33min/Video

Snow Board Flicks

6

Okay, so I can't skateboard worth a damn and I moved to Texas to get away from the snow, but that doesn't mean I can't appreciate snowboarding, and these two videos give you snowboarding up the ass. While they come off at times as ads for board manufacturers (if I see the "Kemper" logo one more time, I'm gonna

puke), they also show some of the more prominent borders slipping and sliding along near every surface available, farting around between runs and generally having a blast Combine that with some excellent thrash music by bands like Gutter Mouth and Grandma's 3rd Battalion, and you have a nice diversion from ABC's *Wide World of Sports*. Also, for dateless slob like myself, *Creatures 2* offers a lot of fishnet bra-wearing babes for your viewing pleasure. Apparently, snowboarders get a lot more groupies than gonzo writers. —P.T.R.

FIGUREHEAD & THE GIFT

15min/16mm



The first flick on this tape is *Figurehead*, an impenetrable six-minute short. Showing tell-tale signs of the dreaded film school syndrome, *Figurehead* is a collection of mysterious images edited together nicely, but making no sense whatsoever! Although the film boasts good camera work and excellent cinematography, I always thought the key to a good film was a great story. That's the one obvious thing missing here. After viewing this I wasn't really excited about sitting through another of director Andrea Maxwell's efforts. (The next one was even longer. Surprise, surprise!) *The Gift*, is another well done short (technically speaking) but again lacks a story. It concerns a woman wanting to give an admirer a special gift. Like Maxwell's previous short, this one is well shot and edited—combined with a decent story this could have been a good overall film. Instead, it's art. —M.I.

THE CAN

80min/Super 8

David Schendel Prods



With all of the unending ripoffs of David Lynch out there in videoland, it's about time someone got inspiration from a real experimental film like *Slacker*. Watching this is like putting LSD on your Rice Crispies: it expands the mind, and it's good for you, too. *The Can* follows the result of a millionaire buying up the world's entire supply of Coca-Cola and drinking it all in a matter of a few years. After he and his girlfriend finish the last can, the empty can makes a trek around the world, becoming a snake toy, a sexual aid for a lonely artist, a crackpipe for a neurotic stoner, numerous ashtrays, a target for two drunken hayseeds (who later get both attacked by a lake monster and abducted by a UFO while ice fishing), a terrestrial artifact for a duo of aliens and a talisman for a spoiled rich girl to return to earth. While it's long, *The Can* is rarely dull and fries brain cells at fifty paces. Just the scene with the artist masturbating with this can is worth the price of the video, and it makes you wonder what director David Schendel could do with a real budget and a six-pack of Jolt. —P.T.R.

HOW DO YOU LIKE ME NOW?

60min/Super 8



Independent filmmakers, being the poor folks they are, usually send us videos taped over previous features. This film was taped over an extremely bad porno film, the last fifteen minutes of which ran after the final film credits

I think I preferred the porno. This almost unwatchable mishmash not only makes no sense in any context, but looks like the film crew used whatever film stock they could shoplift as well as utilizing one of those Edmund Scientific film-to-video projector systems designed for people too cheap to get their video transfer done right. For some reason, this mess also stars Michael De Barres (*The New WKRP*), who somehow makes his performance in *Nightflyers* look good.

—P.T.R.

CALIFORNIA DENIM

30min/Super 8

Dick Muley Prods



Call me Victorian, but I never saw the appeal of soft-core video. If you're watching it alone, it just frustrates the hell out of you and if you're watching it with the love of your life or a casual lay, then what the hell are you doing

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Confusion behind the scenes of *How Do You Like Me Now?*

looking at it—and *Denim* somehow makes celibacy seem a worthwhile option. Save your money and buy a copy of *Café Flesh* instead.

—P.T.R.

WE WILL BURY YOU: TRUTH, BEAUTY, STRANGENESS AND CHARM: CIRCLE OF LOVE & THE MAELSTROM

75min/Film & Video



Here comes yet another exercise in substandard filmmaking in the form of another, this time *extremely* uneven, compilation tape. *We Will Bury You* plays like a bad mutant hybrid of *Bright Lights*, *Big City* and *Compromising Positions* in which two disgruntled post-baby-boomers plot to do away with an unscrupulous co-worker.

It's edited very poorly and the acting and dialog are blatantly bad. In a surreptitiously tacked-on coda, the director tries to shed some light on the genesis and pertinence of the film's title. One minute into viewing *Truth, Beauty, Strangeness and Charm* (sounds like the title of a Hal Hartley film), my friend Rich turned to me and uttered the words "What is this cheesy shit?" It if weren't for the (illegal) inclusion of a Motorhead tune, I would have given this tedious pap a 1 or 2. The best part of this one—short of the fact that it ended—was seeing someone actually walk in front of the screen that the film was taped from.

Just as I was ready to dismiss this tape and relegate it to my pile of blanks, there came a completely unexpected docuvid about a woman living with and dying from

breast cancer. *Circle of Love* is an extremely personal film by David Jachman whose mother, Diana, is its reluctant star. In it, he chronicles her final month of life in a hospital bed after a mastectomy and extensive chemo and radiation therapy have taken their toll. Interviews with Mrs. Jachman are intercut with footage of family visits, including one heart-wrenching scene in which the family says goodbye and tells her they love her and it's okay to "sleep." This is sad. This is true. This is the \$100,000 grand prize winner on *America's Most Tragic Home Videos*. I will not soon forget it.

The Maelstrom is about a brooding young rebel who's got delusions of grandeur when it comes to the lengths to which he plans to take his career as a singer/songwriter. The acting here is pretty

poor, and one scene out-and-out steals from both *Taxi Driver* and *The Wall* when our hero reaches critical mass, shaves his head and stands in front of his mirror, snarling for an audience of one. The songs, by Detroit songwriter John Bardy, are pretty good, kind of XTC-like/R.E.M.-ish, but as a whole, *The Maelstrom* misses its target. —Spiney Norman

UNITED WE STAND

7min/Video

Amanda Brooks Prods



Popping this mini epic into my VCR, I was expecting something serious. The opening is Desert Storm footage with inserts of a special agent sent in to kill Saddam Hussain. As soon as the news footage started I knew I had been fooled. This isn't a

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Just hanging around: Unintentional humor abounds in the female POW saga, **UNITED WE STAND**.

drama, it's a slapstick parody, *ala Airplane!* I was soon rolling out of my chair with bouts of laughter. That explains my ratings for this film. The three is for the serious aspects, while the eight is for a top-notch comedy. I'd actually *pay* to see a feature length version of this. That same evening, I tried to watch *Hot Shots*, and there was no comparison!! *United We Stand* is one of the funniest films I've seen this year

—M.L.

SQUEAL

27min/B&W/16mm

Sparkling Spasm Prods



"Something is amiss, and it smells like pork," reads the jacket to this fairly funny, dark comedy about growing up, rural America under Eisenhower, leisurely pig-worshipping and human sacrifice. Not to be confused with the Alex Winter/Tom Stern compilation *Squeal of Death*, this is about a teenage girl who discovers a book called *Stewards of the Divine Shoat: A Practical Guide to Sacrifice in the 20th Century* (along with a virtual potpourri of human body part) buried in a hole in her back yard. She suspects that her father is the cult's ringleader and teams up with

the town priest to put a stop to dad's extracurricular activities. The writing was quite good, and some interesting pig-to-human analogies were made, one of them being that pigs are the undeserving vessels of human hatred.

Although some of the performances were a bit rough, *Squeal* was moderately engaging. I *did* like it. It *was* funny I *did* laugh. The main detraction was the film's uneven lighting. Details in some scenes were nearly impossible to make out because the whites were just so darned white. Other scenes were dark when they shouldn't have been. This all seems to be a combination of both the print and the video transfer. Had it not been for this glaring inadequacy, I would have enjoyed the film a great deal more

—S.N.

59 MILES

23min/16mm



It all started out impressively enough—three friends relaxing on a Florida beach. The colors were rich and full. The picture was crisp and clear. But then the characters began to speak, and it became evident that despite its exceptional technical quality, the cast and crew had to be one



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and the same, which, as the credits showed, turned out to be true. The plot concerns three friends who are subjected to psychological humiliation dealt out by a more than slightly disturbed hitch-hiker who they foolishly pick up. The driver is a blonde prep-pie-looking girl who is driving home from a beach trip with two male school friends. One is left in the rest room of a filling station when our unstable gun-toting antagonist commandeers the vehicle, leaving our hapless heroine essentially helpless, as her other friend, who is blind, sits floundering in the back seat and is forced at gunpoint to masturbate whilst proclaiming his secret love for our heroine. Essentially, *59 Miles* suffers from a sometimes silly, yet not completely derivative, script and the wrath of over-eager non-actors. This is partially made up for by the fact that it looks so good, but not enough to warrant an overwhelming recommendation.

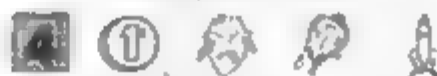
—S.N.

GOOD TO BE HERE; VIVA LAS VENTRON & LEFT TURNS

38min/B&W and Color

Super 8&16mm

Burning Bush Prods



Let's face it—anthology tapes can just flat out suck. From a production standpoint, however, they're easier to make than something feature-length—putting months or even years worth of your own or others' work together on one tape at a comparatively minimal cost. This tape, by David Aquino and Richard Sears, though, was a pleasure to watch. I fully appreciated *Good To Be Here*, a story of a young green new-age musician from Vermont who

comes to "Hollyweird" with dreams of making it (I just moved here from Boston [pronounced "Bah-stin"] for similar reasons). Axl Rose's controversial "Psychopaths and vagrants" line from "One in a Million" came to mind while watching (or was it "Metal-heads and tourists... Game show hosts and hookers?")

Viva Las Ventron is a surprisingly funny sci-fi spoof about an extraterrestrial, XTRO-6, with orders to exterminate the King of Earth, which becomes the basis for a big Elvis joke. The effects are intentionally cheesy, but serve their purpose and add to the comedy. Lasers are haphazardly scratched on the film stock, the dialog is replaced by silent era-style titles and XTRO-6 is just one of those upright helmet-like hair dryers on wheels (who, in one scene, drops acid). Obsessive behavior is dealt with in a most entertaining way in *Left Turns*, about a man whose near-psychotic urges to take left-hand turns in a city where they're not permitted. The color is a bit washed out, and the picture a mite grainy, giving it, inadvertently, an effective high school educational film look.

—S.N.

WHITE TRASH AT HEART

33min/Video



"Where does an all-in-fun parody end and gluteus-smooching homage begin?" The makers of this ode to David Lynch don't seem to know, as their video *White Trash at Heart* shows. The beauty of a good parody is that virtually anyone who views it gets the joke in some capacity. The fatal flaw here is that if you've got less than a

fanatic comprehension of David Lynch's films (*Eraserhead*, *Blue Velvet*, *Wild at Heart*, as well as *Twain Peaks*), you'll just sit there, mouth agape, not getting the joke (which is the way most people, I've found, react to Monty Python). Whenever you shoot on video for any reason other than a stylistic device (i.e., no budget) you get that inadvertent cable access/porno movie look—which *White Trash* suffers from in varying degrees. There is, however, an interesting close-up (for you anatomy fans, presumably) of what is supposed to be David Lynch's uvula, which is something there's not nearly enough of today in popular cinema. In all, hardcore Lynch fans need only apply, but they will probably love it. —S.N.

THE ROOM

12min/16mm

Balsmeyer Films

7



The Room is an exceptional short about a kid and his lousy lifestyle. His dad doesn't want him going out after dusk and his mom is too timid to say anything on his behalf. The only thing the kid can do is escape to his room with his books—where he finds his freedom, in more

ways than one. With excellent photography and a trio of superb actors, Jeff Balsmeyer has directed a pretty good film here. My only complaint is that the story is a little too sentimental for my taste. I'm not big on *E.T.* type shit. For those of you who weep uncontrollably upon viewing *The Wizard of Oz* or mist-up every time *Miracle on 34th Street* airs, this film would rate even higher (although most FTVG readers don't fit this description there must be at least a couple of you Alan Alda fans left out there). I'd just like to recommend to all those wannabe filmmakers out there—you should watch this for a bit of Film 101. —M.L.

WARD 13: THE SNAPPING TEETH

9min/Video

3

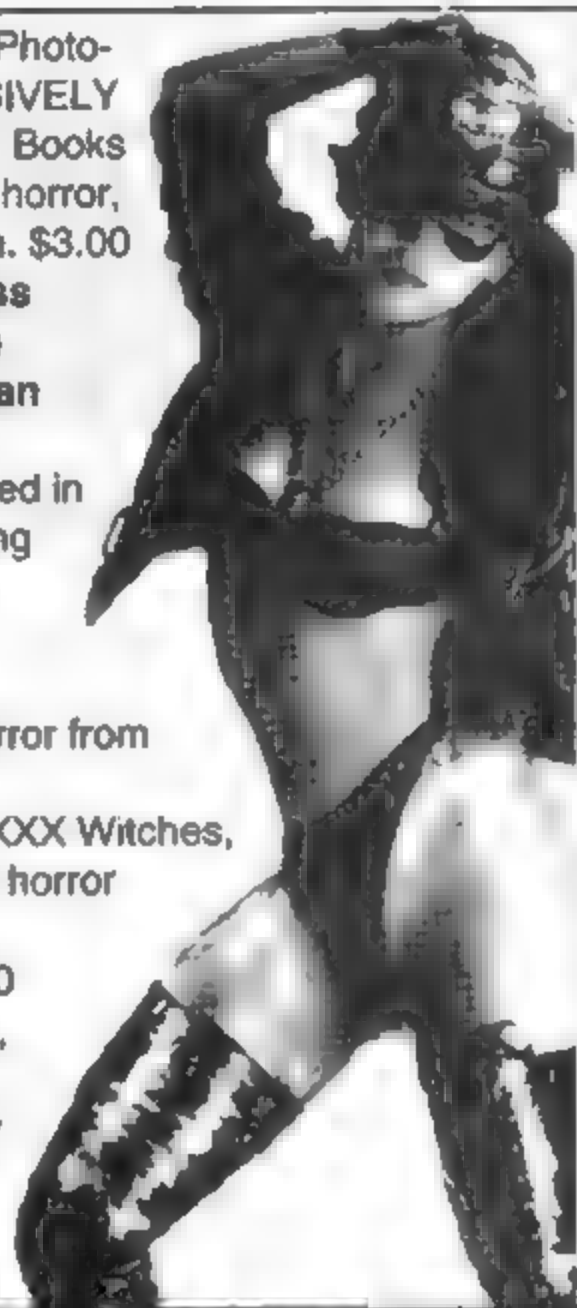


In this cryptic and pretentious two-song music video, a mysterious black-clad figure, looking much like a no-budget version of Decker from *Nightbreed*, lumbers about aimlessly to an annoying industrial, gothic-like soundtrack, which was probably recorded on a Yamaha 4-track in someone's parents' basement. Perhaps I wasn't the right person to review this



Surreal abode ejection in *The Room*.

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tape, but it would appear to suck by anyone's standards of quality. —S.N.

INSIDE S.W.A.T.—AMERICA'S ELITE IN ACTION

45min/Video

Polodin Press



I grew up idolizing *S.W.A.T.* as well as all other para-military type groups and spent a fair amount of time running around with a wooden rifle in hand saying, "Hut, hut, hut..." as well as cheering on UPS trucks as they lumbered down the block—presumably loaded with a terrorist response team. Well, it seems that the TV show I grew up with, as well as my overactive imagination, both turned out to be misleading. This was the second most bor-

ing documentary I have ever seen in my life. The technical side of the coin was good except that the director should have cut a couple of his *S.W.A.T.* demonstrators in favor of cardboard cut-outs. Their stiff delivery and redundancy was mind numbing. The few highlights include an impromptu rap song that a young black cadet was ordered to perform—whether it was part of his training or not I'm still unsure. Also, an expert sniper confesses that he sometimes takes his rifle home to site up family and neighbors while they're unaware because nothing compares to having a real head under the cross-hairs. *Yikes!* Although the title claims to show the elite "in action," there really is none here. Just a bunch of overweight, gung-ho cops who

MINI INTERVIEW

DANNY BONADUCE

Who cares about a has-been, former drug abusing, would-be John? We do! The star of the up-coming America's Deadliest Home Videos (see story last issue), Bonaduce is also perpetually entertaining.

Interview by Stuart Hersh

Describe the audition for Partridge Family.
The first literally had more than 200 children lining the halls. The part called for a smart, financial type wizard and they had kids that looked like Alfalfa, made up to look like Jackie Coogan and Jacky Cooper. It's amazing what parents will do to children. Anyway, I got the part because I had taken to memorizing *The Book of Quotes*. Somebody would say something to me, and I'd quote Jesus or Napoleon, whatever was applicable for the moment.

So now you're in the Partridge Family. Tell me about it.

Danny was a breeze for me. I never saw the work in it. I was a kid, smoking cigarettes outside the studio—so I was a regular kid in a very expensive business, and I refused to not be a kid. Twice I stole the bus when I was twelve.

What was the highlight of being on the show?

If I never do anything again, I did the number one show in the nation. I ate dinner at the White House. If I eat off the street, so what? I ate at the White House and you didn't.

Who were you closest to?

Without a doubt, Dave Madden, the guy who played Rubin. Dave was the most bizarre man I've ever met. He's responsible for how weird I am today, and I thank him for it. He taught me how to investigate something to its totally illogical conclusion and experiment on rules and realities. If he was ignored by a waitress, he'd start a fire on the table. I'm a big fire starter in restaurants and I owe it all to Dave.

Are you on the Partridge Family records?

No. I didn't make anything off the albums, the lunch boxes

I had one of those lunch boxes.

Pretty much no social life for you, huh? I didn't know anybody who had a *Partridge Family* lunch box that went on to do anything of any importance



Danny cuddles with real-life wife Gretchen, his costar in *AMERICA'S DEADLIEST HOME VIDEOS*.

probably couldn't get into the military.
—C.F.

SWELTER IN VOGUE!

12min/8&W/Super 8



Swelter in Vogue, about the adventures of a young submissive man and his female dominatrix, was made expressly for voyeuristic S&M enthusiasts. The story is simple enough—a Young Urban Professional enters the basement of a non-descript suburban house. He calmly proceeds to dress in a full leather body suit, submitting himself to the whims of his mistress, all the while writhing in ecstasy. While I love bondage as much as the next person, I found *Vogue* to deliver less than its cover photos promised, as I was half-expecting some serious revelations about the secret nature of suburban sexuality. Although the film's visuals were competent, and at times surprisingly original, *Vogue* was little more than a mildly interesting music video.

—Kevin Burke

SURVIVING A STREET KNIFE FIGHT: REALISTIC DEFENSIVE TECHNIQUES

70min/Video

Paladin Press



As you can determine from the title of this instructional opus, watching *Surviving* could save your life. This video will keep you riveted to your seat—that is until you excitedly try out some of the handy moves that you learn from expert instructors. *Pivot! Swivel! Block! Lunge! Surviving* makes a knife fight look like a cake-walk, and I was so thrilled with my new techniques that I went right out

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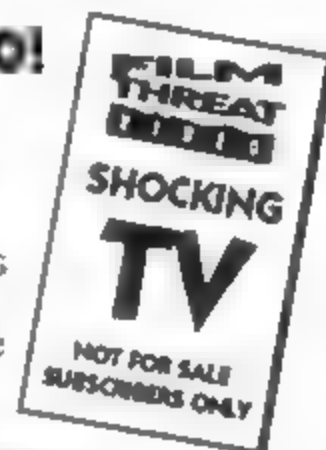
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to the Mid-Wilshire district in Los Angeles and randomly taunted people until some poor fool took the bait and pulled a switchblade on me. I disarmed the unlucky fellow and slashed him across the stomach so that he would die slow! If you like sharp objects, you'll love this video! —K.B.

LUNATIC

90min/Video



Lunatic is best watched by holding down the fast-forward button throughout the length of the video—stopping occasionally for all-too-brief scenes of nudity that will leave you flaccid physically and emotionally (it's a lot shorter and less painful this way). The story follows a young, white-trash serial killer, as he commits misogynistic rapes/murders of consistently naked women. Usually, I am annoyed by feature narratives that are shot on video, but as a medium, video seems to be cheaper and therefore more accessible, and exceptions must be made. *Lunatic*, however, has no excuse—clearly the makers of this video had money to burn on lame prosthetics to make the murder scenes more "realistic"—money that could have been well spent on actual film instead of ludicrous special effects. In the end—the only lunatic involved with this film is me... for watching it. —K.B.

PARADE-MANIA

10min/16mm

The Circle of Confusion



The title of this short film is perhaps a little misleading. When I think of parades I think of John Phillip Sousa,

beauty queens, clowns in little cars, seventy-six trombones and Robert Preston—God rest his soul. What we have here instead is a wandering tale of a man who is about to take his first trip to New York to watch the annual St. Patrick's Day parade. He has somehow missed this fair city during his many excursions around the globe in search of parades. The idea of this guy as a world traveller is hard to believe, but you forget about it after a couple minutes as the meandering storyline grabs hold. Brendan Curran plays the gap-toothed parade fan in a flat, cracker barrel manner that is more often than not amusing and the only thing that kept my interest during this short.

—Chris Froude

TAE KWON DO FORMS AND THEIR COMBAT APPLICATIONS

45min/Video

Polodin Press



"Some of these blows can cause broken bones, permanent paralysis or death." After reading that line before the start of the tape I must admit I was pretty excited to learn some cool death blows so that I could grow a slick ponytail, make multi-million dollar action movies and marry a beautiful model. After the first five minutes, however, I realized there would be no such luck in my immediate future. This video was designed as a companion to formal training. It lists the twelve fundamental steps in Tae Kwon Do and has an expert demonstrate how they may be used in a combat situation. I thought that all the steps pretty much looked the same, but I did enjoy watch-

IN THE WORKS

The first word on upcoming films

SHRAMM

The latest feature from German director Jorg Buttgereit and producer Manfred Jelinski, *Schramm* threatens to brutally redefine the serial killer genre as they continue their efforts (*Nekromantik*, *The Death King*, *Nekromantik 2*) in the world of independent horror. Seen entirely through the fevered eyes of the titular sociopath, the film is reported to play like a surreal amalgam of *Videodrome* and



The serial killer in *SHRAMM* breaks a leg.

Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer. Starring Florian Kerner Von Gustorf as Schramm (pictured) and *Nekromantik 2*'s Monika M., the film will possibly be finished by this summer.

DARKNESS

While Kansas is not known as a hot bed of filmmaking, that has done little to stop 23-year-old Leif Jonker, whose self-proclaimed "ultimate in vampire horror" film *Darkness* is finally winding down after three years in production. A no-budget epic along the lines of *The Dead Next Door*—but without the corny inside jokes—the film's skull-shattering climax features a massive vampire meltdown *a la* *Near Dark*; but with multiple exploding head effects. Not for the squeamish for sure. The 120 minute rough cut is currently being paired down to a tight 90, as even Jonker accepts that the super-gory *finale* is a bit too much.



Mega-gore from *DARKNESS*.

ing the instructor beat up on his padded "dummies." Even with their big protective phallic head gear these cats still hit the ground with a bang. Board breaking was also a popular theme throughout the video, but please do not attempt at home. I would recommend this to any Tae-Kwon Do student looking for something to practice with at home. Sort of the *Jane Fonda's Workout* of the martial arts.

—C.F.

THE COMPLETE UNFINISHED WORKS OF PAUL KAZEE

18min/B&W and Color/16mm



Made while Kazez attended NYU, this collection is actually a display of what he got out of his tuition money. And



The lonely geek from *And You're So Special?*

from what I saw, it wasn't much! The first couple shorts are typically disjointed film-school efforts, ranging from a urine-drinking comedy to Dziga Vertov-like construc-

tions involving machines. The only highlight is *And You're So Special*, a cynical tale of loneliness and depression about a maternally repressed young man in search of attention. Following the sound of a female neighbor's singing, he finds a beautiful blonde sheathed in green sequins lounging about her roach-infested apartment—petrified, he flees back to his personal hell. If you've seen *Eraserhead* more than once, or lived in a

college dorm room, this doesn't seem so special. Trust me Paul, you're finished—and out about \$10,000 over four years.

—Roudy Yates

SOMETIMES AT THE CHEROKEE SINK

30min/Super 8 & 16mm
Independent 8 Film Prods



"Underground" Florida filmmaker Matt Smith received some advice when he was first starting off in the movie biz from the famous director Elia Kazan—"Some people will accept what you do and some will hate it." Sorry Matt, but I fall into the later category. While this film is not completely terrible the only things worth praising are the attractive babes who populate most of the film, not to mention it's short running time. The film has a confusing storyline concerning fossils and serial killers and the college kids who are investi-

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gating them. This was shot on Super 8 and judging by the editing, Smith not only got minimal coverage of the action, but was working with meager technical means. Between every different shot the loss of sound or the appearance of color bars got to be annoying REAL quick. The acting was pretty pathetic also. I know this is supposed to be a campy "underground" film, but give me a break!! Just because you have lousy acting and dialogue doesn't mean you have a cult classic on your hands. This thing is supposed to be a big hit at

Florida raves, but the only reason I can see this film being shown is to get the party-goers on acid to fall asleep peacefully. —M.L.

GHOST CHILD

15min/16mm



Ghost Child is a pretty predictable short about a graveyard worker and his pregnant wife. Every night while he patrols the grounds (all 12 tombstones) he hears a baby crying and sees a woman who he thinks is homeless wandering about. After his wife loses the baby, he goes back to work and you won't believe what happens next...! Most people who have seen at least one *Twilight Zone* in their lifetime can figure it out. Even though the story here is pretty dry, it still isn't a bad film. The photography is good and the film's pacing helps keep you interested.

—M.L.

sound quality. We're talking way out of focus and way, WAY outta sync throughout large parts of this film. Low-budget constraints aside, ya still gotta pull off the basics I'm as sick of all the hype still surrounding the (Late) King as the next guy, but this amateurish dreck ain't nothin' but a hound dog! —M.B.

FEAR THE GLADIATORS OF MR. BIG

14min/Film & Video



I got a great idea. I'll gather all my friends, we'll buy a whole bunch of beer, and we'll make a movie some weekend. Such seemed to be the production strategy in this miserably poor offering. Intrigued by the title, I was immediately disappointed. In a nutshell, a guy owes \$500 to Mr. Big. He goes to Canada to try to raise it and...okay, I could sit here and argue that if this asshole could afford to take a trip to Canada, he should be able to come up with five bills, but it would be taking this movie far too seriously to start getting into questions about the plot. Suffice it to say that the rest of the movie centers on four drunken idiots wearing Burger King-like gladiator helmets birching among themselves about Mr. Big and how to get our hero to pay up. I got an idea. Make the delinquent debtor watch this tape a few times and he'd sell his blood to raise the cash. This sucked.

—M.B.

THIS IS ELVIS' BIRTHDAY '92

27min/Super 8

Eldo Forms



I think this film was supposed to be a "mockumentary" about Elvis' Birthday, poking fun at all those idiots who still revere the bloated one as a demigod. However, the film consisted primarily of host interviewer Mike Hudson hanging around somebody's kitchen, calling people on the phone and talking to them about their supposed Elvis memories. First of all, you can't parody Elvis fanatics because the fanatics themselves are so ridiculously stupid. But, content aside, what was most annoying about this film was the absolutely awful picture and

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at top and bottom? Look, *Laurence of Arabia* needed scope—*Pool Guy* doesn't. A vaguely *Repo Man*-esque take on the LAPD (Los Angeles Pool Dept.), this dry comedy features a hot-shot skimmer jockey who's partner doesn't appreciate his high-spirited top gunning. He's a misfit—a rebel. Funniest Bit: Our hero rescues a poodle from an over-chlorinated cement pond. Not exactly a black comedy and less so a farce. *Pool Guy* does have some dumb laughs, but ultimately drowns in a sea of misfired gags. —R.Y.



WAITING TO ACT

30min/16mm

Putch-Potrick Prods



Even the most blatant attempts at mainstream commercial filmmaking are usually from a small group of people who are highly motivated to make a film with a unique twist or hook so that they can hopefully make more films in the future. Imagine my surprise, then, when I sat down to watch *Waiting To Act*, in which we have the story of a struggling young waiter, er, actor trying to get his big break, falling in love with another struggling actress/waitress, and ultimately succeeding...sort of. I was surprised because *Waiting* doesn't seem like a movie at all, let alone an independent-minded, free-thinking personalized movie. Instead, it seems to be an orphaned episode of a never-aired network series, full of mildly amusing, warmed-over Hollywood self-examination clichés and self-indulgent parody. Two examples: 1) the aforementioned "actor as waiter thing" and 2) a "seen-it-a-million-times-before" cattle call reading for a (very) minor

Bad bondage dominates the action in the Southern-fried anthology **SHOCK THERAPY**.

part. Oh, Hollywood's a kooky, nutty place, all right. When Jean Stapleton, Ed Begley, Jr., and Dana Hill amongst other notables, make appearances in the film, it only adds to that disorienting TV-like illusion. Don't get me wrong, this is not a bad movie. For one thing, it was nice to see something lit, photographed, and edited decently for a change with dialogue that both made sense and that I could understand! In addition to these top-notch production values, Charles Van Eman and Helen Hunt(!) do credible jobs as the hero and heroine. And I admit to taking joy from anything that makes Hollywood look ridiculous. —M.B.

SHOCK THERAPY

118min/Video

Ross Wells Films



Another anthology tape, Ross Wells' *Shock Therapy* is typically hit or miss, but mostly miss. First is *Raven's Nightmare*, a staggering epic that collapses under its own weight as a posse of *Deliver-*

ance extras (i.e., Texans) offer some Lone Star hospitality to a hapless lassie (i.e., rape and crucifixion). Conveniently chased through the woods and a cemetery in floating-camera *Evil Dead*-style, she is ultimately trapped by Lester Sturges and his watermelon-picking brethren. Corn-pone antics ensue. The entire ordeal is enhanced by Leighton Hamilton's great blues soundtrack—making it listenable but still unwatchable. Next is *The Hunter Gracibus*, self-described as Texas-styled Franz Kafka. Like *real* Kafka though, *Gracibus* is impenetrable (and unbearable). Watching a woman in flowing robes flaunt around a bunch of rocks is not my idea of a good time and I admit that I gave up early on in its 37 minute duration—leaving the rest unwatched. The final installment is *The Haunting of Mary Shelley*, a cheapo version of Ken Russell's *Gothic* that is equally *unentertaining*. The hand-written, self-congratulatory press kit included with this tape was the final nail in the coffin. —R.Y.

KAKA FERSKUR

32min/Super 8

Feminette Prods



This annoyingly camp take on the Pipi Longstocking character is annoying. Laden with non-sequetters, the story lamely updates the Pipi story by recasting her sister as a Saab-driving yuppie. Gee, just in time for the 90s—evil yuppies. Who would have thought? But after scenes involving a death defying game of Scrabble, I guess anything would seem entertaining at that point; although the following antics featuring flashers, buttermaids and gold-chained playboys never do. Director Todd Hughes obviously spent more time putting together his press kit than the film.

—David E. Williams

PSYCHEDELIC GLUE SNIFFIN' HILLBILLIES

Craig Smith Films

30min/Super 8



The title almost says it all. This is a raw, high energy film that jumps between psychedelic imagery and *cinéma vérité* (that's "real cinema" for all you bozos) footage of backwoods folk. The psychedelic sections are very 60's with kaleidoscopic effects and multiple exposures—which creates a subliminal feeling of *Southern Comfort*-brand hippiedom. The interviews, if you would call them such, are definitely out there. The best would be the drunk they cornered in their basement. Fans of guerrilla filmmaking in all its glory should check it out—as should anyone who watches *Cops* to see white trash. —Josh Boggs

TRIANGLE/ A THIN LINE

45min/Super 8

Paragon Pictures



Too much story, too poorly told, in too little time, sums up *Triangle* and its sequel, *A Thin Line*. The Story: Killer breaks into home, kills Husband. Wife embraces Killer, making it appear that they are in cahoots. Killer whacks her too in "twist" ending. In the sequel, curiously alive Husband comes to terms with Wife's death. Killer is released from prison. Husband stalks and kills in vengeance. High Points: Fat chick and Domino's delivery guy get offed. Low Point: How I felt after enduring through this sub-par mainstream knock-off

—D.E.W.

MIDNIGHT RAMBLER

85min/Video

Maraschino Cabal Prods



The fact that this tape was made in Canada is far more telling than most people would think. The languid tale has the overrated Capra flick *It's A Wonderful Life* inspiring a psychotic youth to bring his murderous fantasies to life. The victims, a Norman Bates clone, a disenfranchised beer-guzzling kid (Hey, this *is* Canadian!) and a pair of LSD-tripping love birds all deserve to die, but our psycho fails in each and every case (wetting his pants in one episode). Fortunately though, the filmmakers include plenty of his blood-letting day dreams before the killer defuses his inner rage by

(sniff!) making a friend. Despite the sappy sap ending, *Midnight* does have some funny drug-induced babbling and one brilliant shot of our lead psycho being slapped around by his dad as George Bailey gets whacked upside the head in the background. *Ouch! Not my ear!* —D.E.W.

THE SECRET OF EASTER ISLAND

8min/16mm

Jeff Berry Prods



A farcical comedy about one of the stone sentinels coming to life, wandering into Los Angeles and nearly becoming a piece of yuppie-owned sculpture, *The Secret of Easter Island* is funny but ultimately lame. The general afterward feeling being that of "so what?" Sure, the real Easter Island locations and

excellent production values help, but this is ultimately a pretty half-baked effort.

—R.Y.

HELLROLLER

90 long minutes/Video



Formula cult films seldom work and *Hellroller* is no exception. Granted, the plot offers us the world's first wheelchair-bound serial killer, but that's where any semblance of originality and creativity ends. Like a porn film with a penchant for badly-executed gore effects and predictably sophomoric humor, *Hellroller* lamely exploits the following formula *ad nauseam*: Show beautiful girl get naked then kill her with great gouts of blood. Featuring a pseudonymed Mary Woronov (Gee, wonder why!), the voluptuous Hypa-

Carl J. Sukenick's

Alien Beasts

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ria Lee and Eric Caiden—in a rather embarrassing turn—this jumbled morass of poorly shot and edited “scenes” is probably the scariest thing on four wheels since the Ford Pinto—if only because it too was made by human beings.

—D.E.W.

THE ART OF CREATING LATEX MASKS

51min/Video

Fantastic Images



Weaned on the likes of *Sesame Street*, I demand to be entertained, dammit—even while learning. So, I sat through this dry instructional video patiently waiting for something, anything, to happen. It never did! But I did experience the challenging process of creature mask making, from designing and sculpting to molding and painting the finished product. Karl Zundel unemotionally narrates the step-by-step construction of his horny, S-browed, spitfire demon. Divided into three decisive sections, amateur F/X hounds will no doubt learn enough “professional sculpting techniques,” “advanced mold making procedures” and “in-depth painting and detailing” to create masks for fun and profit. Professionally made, the video clearly shows the hands-on techniques of a veteran mask maker—but be prepared to fork out megabucks for the vast amount of expensive materials Zundel recommends. Unfortunately, not every artist follows the same procedures (I learned this process somewhat differently) and there’s no inexpensive short cuts to creating latex masks (I discovered this the hard way!) However, don’t expect this tape to make you an Academy Award

winning artisan; this is Mask Making 101 and little else.

—C.O.

BEST AMERICAN HORROR STORIES VOL. I

90min/16mm

Mark Jacobs Prods



This collection of well-crafted adaptations of Edgar Allan Poe/Ambrose Bierce/Nathaniel Hawthorne short stories is sufficiently gruesome and not to be confused with recent PBS efforts on the same subjects. Rampantly self-reflexive—with one Poe-like character even referring to Poe—the tales are also adult enough to include some well-executed nudity. However, my praise stops there. Like the recent Romero/Argento feature *Two Evil Eyes*, this effort gets bogged down in interpolating these tales of terror (*The Black Cat*, *Tell Tale Heart*, etc.) into visuals. Poe’s interior woes read well, but have seldom translated well (without the aid of Roger Corman). Best segment is *The Snake*, in which a yuppie dinner party is disrupted when a guest ingests a serpent. Funny and stomach-churning despite minimal effects.

—D.E.W.

SOMETHING DEAD

31min/Super 8

Mumbling Men & Women Prods



Let me say that this could easily be padded out to a feature length film—given the right polish and careful scripting, that is. Two nerdtypes are thrust into a Southern survival group’s idea of a fun time; an overnight stay in dense, scary woods at the time of the resurgence of an ancient curse. Of course, before it’s all

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over, they will do battle with the "living dead" and prove their macho ability. This mostly-dark movie is adequately acted, well lit, and provides a solid half hour of cheap fun. —T.B.

PUPPADERE

8min/Super 8

C. Bolts Fly Prods



I'm not sure. But I think this tape was sent to the wrong place. This is FILM THREAT VIDEO GUIDE, not the local psychiatric ward. A trained psychologist should be evaluating this thing, not me. I really don't want to know what's going on in the mind of the psycho who made this thing. The tape starts off with a rambling, incoherent statement having something to do with fucking around with



Should this buck-toothed PUPPADERE mutant be sufficient evidence to have its creator committed?

Mother Nature. The next practically silent eight minutes would make a good film backdrop for The Butthole Surfers (and that's a compli-

ment), but this is a total waste on the home screen. I could be wrong, but this looks like a film school project meant to piss off the professors. I hope

it's a school project—because anyone who would make this on their own volition needs some serious help

—Dave Parker

DEAD BEAT

47min/Super 8

Super Cheap Films, Inc



This film starts slowly and slows down from there. The story revolves around Neal, a 39-year-old drummer wannabe and otherwise nice guy-loser, who's still stuck playing weddings in a cheap tuxedo with his band. To escape the incessant nagging of his girlfriend about his lack of a "real" job and his failure to provide them with a decent place to raise any future kids, Neal constantly watches TV. But Neal doesn't simply escape into your average sic-

Richard Newton's small white house

"Features the lingering odor of a kinkiness that's probably far more normal than most people would admit outside their bedrooms."

- David E. Williams, *FILM THREAT*

"Bataille meets L.A., splattered with cartons of raw eggs."

- Manohla Dargis, *The Village Voice*

"small white house is my idea of pornography."

- Helen Knodel, *L.A. Weekly*

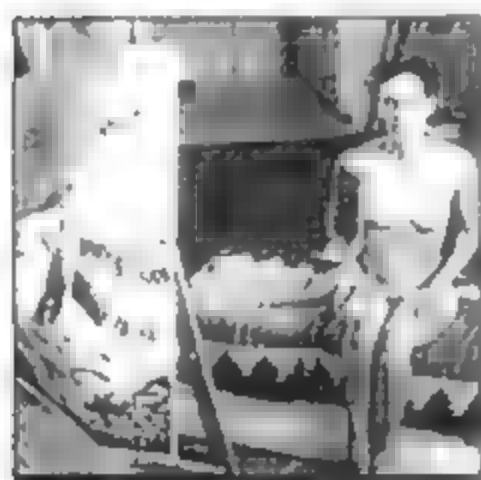
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com. He's fixated on global thermonuclear warfare, watching and reading anything he can find on the subject. And that's where my comprehension of the plotline breaks down. The best parts include montage sequences cut together from a variety of different nuclear holocaust movies and television shows. With the thawing of the Cold War, it's always interesting to take a look at the way we were—it almost seems like an apocalyptic version of *Reefer Madness*. **M B**



Getting naked for art in the thrifty sex-film spoof **LA SCALA DI VITO**.

LA SCALA DI VITO

24min/Video

Piranha Pictures



Wow! Finally something made incredibly cheap, but with extremely high professional production values! Made for less than 300 bucks, this tape utilizes Hi-8 video, a Macintosh computer, and a Fostex 8 track to produce a very entertaining tape. Basically, it's a parody of Italian sex films, (Lina Wertmüller, in particular) where there's incredibly ridiculous dialog, lots of overacting and horrendously bad dubbing. It's about a woman who suspects her artist husband of having an affair and her attempts to win him back. With very

funny sets (check out the glass case filled with action figures like Mr. T), and purposely out of sync ADR, this should be required viewing for anyone who's contemplating producing their own tape. You wouldn't believe the garbage I gotta sit through sometimes. —D.P

DYNAMITE

14min/Super 8

Noah's Ark Films



Normally I hate ninja/kung-fu/karate films. I would rather eat a bowl of someone else's toenails than endure such movies. This one is different. It's very short, very funny, and, in the tradition of *Kentucky Fried Movie*, pokes gentle fun at the Industry. I really liked the out-of-sync voice dubs. Too bad the fighting sequences go on too long. You could do much worse than *Dynamite*—you could always buy a previously-viewed copy of *My Girl*. —T.B

A SENSITIVELY CRUEL VIDEO ABOUT APATHETIC DESIRE

18min/Video

Perspiration Precipitation

Perception Prods



From the pretentious sounding company comes a, "perpetually putrid piece of puke" to quote my esteemed friend Greg as he wrenched this tape from the VCR. This collection of six misogynist, pseudo-cerebral shorts with titles like *Two Thumbs Up Carl Jung's Butt*, *Bidet of Undying Nothingness* and *God's Little Whorehouse* is essentially a waste of tape. The "mastermind" behind this project is a former theology student, which explains

the mock puppet show segment where Jesus (played by a shoe) is subjected to listening to the juvenile taunts of two children ("Oh yeah, well I saw Sally jerking off the mailman"). The only part of this tape that I really liked was when this fat guy in drag lip-synched some Rosemary Clooney tune. Other than that, the only worth this tape has is as something to hold up my kitchen window. —S.N.

O NO CORONADO

60min/B&W and

Color/Film

Film Threat Video



Craig Baldwin, the Bay Area master of slash and burn assemblage filmmaking, is back with a surreal ode to the Columbus-initiated Spanish conquest of the Americas. This is a high school history class on acid, and as in his last effort, *Tribulation 99*, Baldwin utilizes fragments of other (lesser) films to fulfill his hallucinations. Need a battle sequence but don't have the budget to stage one? Fol-



CORONADO's freaky conquistador.

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low the Baldwin Plan: Find one among your massive collection of old films, STEAL IT and splice it together with other footage. However, while ingenious and highly watchable (if only for trying to guess what films the various clips came from), *O No Coronado* fails to achieve the *Trib 99* level of pure entertainment value. Specifically, *Coronado's* similar but more overt political message of anti-imperialism kills some of the fun—leaving the flick with faint preachiness amidst the psychedelia. I know the conquistadors were a bunch of God-bothering rapists, so don't bear me over the head with it. And the face-heavy narration is so straightforwardly conventional that it

In a scene of No Values...
Where climbing to the top means climbing into bed
Where drugs and cheap thrills fill the date book
Where Rock 'n' Roll means Death 'n' Destruction...

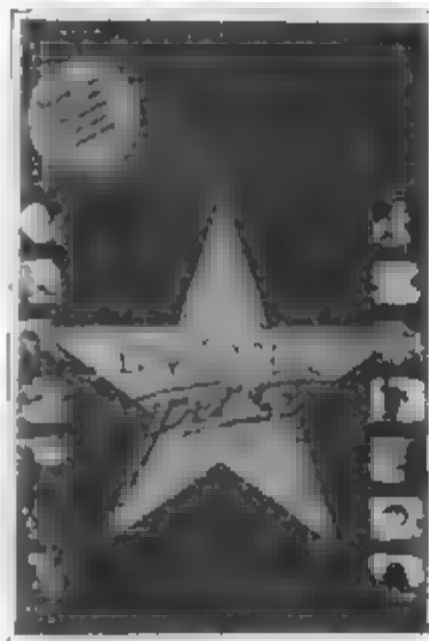
DESPERATE TEENAGE LOVEDOLLS



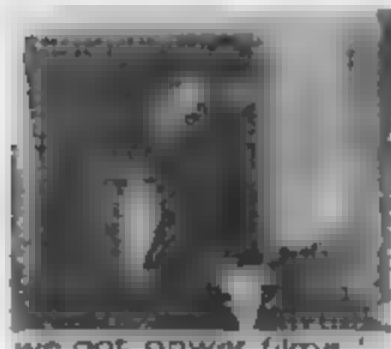
WE GOT POWER FILMS' catalyst was instantly received as a trash classic in 1984. Bunny, Kitty, & Patch (Hilary Rubens, Jennifer Schwartz, & Janet Housden) are three teenage runaways who form an all girl band, The Lovedolls, who are discovered by the sleazy Johnny Truaine (Steve McDonald), and become overnight sensations. Their rise to the top is marred by the rival girl gang The She Devils. Soundtrack by Redd Kross, Black Flag, and Nip Drivers. (WGP 001 - VHS \$22.50 Postpaid)

LOVEDOLLS SUPERSTAR

The 'Dolls return from their demise in the 1986 sequel. More than just a band, now a religious cult. The Lovedolls take on the president, and the world. The original cast returns with Jeff McDonald, Tracy Lea, Sky Saxon, Jello Biafra, and Vicki Peterson. Because, Superstars, they never die... Soundtrack by Redd Kross, Black Flag, Sonic Youth, Meat Puppets, & Dead Kennedys. (WGP 002 - VHS \$22.50 Postpaid)



SOME SHIT



**some
SHIT**

THE SLOG MOVIE

Los Angeles Hardcore '81. Interviews and live performances from Black Flag, Fear, Wasted Youth, Circle One, Circle Jerks, Sin 34, Cheifs, Red Cross, and more! (WGP 004 - VHS \$22.50 Postpaid)

BY DAVID J. MARKEY A collection of short films from The Lovedolls mastermind himself. Includes Redd Kross' "Macaroni & Me", the satan-teen manifesto "Stoner Park", the clowning "Popcorn", Kim Gordon in "Astro Turf", The Shaggs' scored "Puppetears", and more. (WGP 003 - VHS \$10.00 Postpaid)



Pill popping in the VALENTINE segment of THE HOLY TRINITY.

almost seems to come from another film. Another key difference from *Trib 99* is that here Baldwin actually shot some of his own footage, helping to smooth over certain sequences and add detail. Luckily, he also manages to inject sufficient gags into the mix, making it as funny as possible, considering the surrounding material. For *Trib 99* freaks, this is a definite must. —D.E.W.

THE HOLY TRINITY

45min/Video

Eyefuck Films Int



American-in-England videographer Richard Baylor, who last assaulted (and to some insulted) us with the anthology *You Made Your Bed...Now Die In It!*, has produced this follow-up, *The Holy Trinity*. Though he again relies heavily on stock "underground" aesthetics (i.e. strobe lit, B&W, anti-religion, death imagery), Baylor transcends the stereotypes by sheer execution. The standout of the three featurettes showcased here is *Jesus Hates You*. A visual barrage of religious icons intercut with such nifty slogans as "Bend over for God" and snippets of hardcore porn is just the start as Baylor

pushes further—adding original clips of plasma baptisms, numerous video effects and hardcore sounds from such appropriately named bands as White Slug. In all, *Jesus Hates You* is a Born Again's worst nightmare and Baylor's best so far. The surrounding efforts, *Dead Love* (featuring domestic violence) and *My Funny Valentine* (an ironic suicide statement) are also entertaining, but don't quite reach the same boiling point. In all though, this is another vicious stab at the status quo. —D.E.W.

VIDEO SCRAMBLE #1

110min/Video



Where else could you see such tasty tidbits as an elephant electrocution, artificial bovine insemination and a time-lapse view of a dead field mouse being devoured by maggots? It's all here, as well as countless other snippets combed from dozens of hours of taped material. There's a bit on disfigurement from *Oprah*, a feature from *Hard Copy* on the dubious Mr. Manson as well as Crispin Glover's embarrassing appearance on *Letterman*. LSD and marijuana seemed to be recurring

WE GOT POWER FILMS

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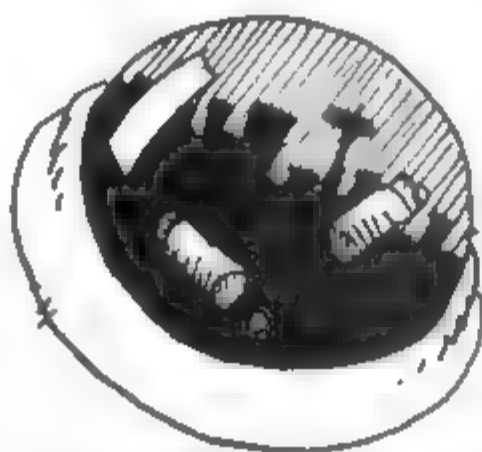


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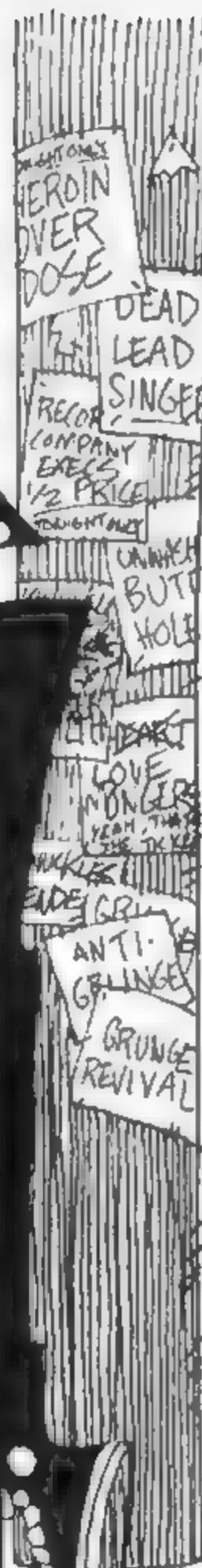
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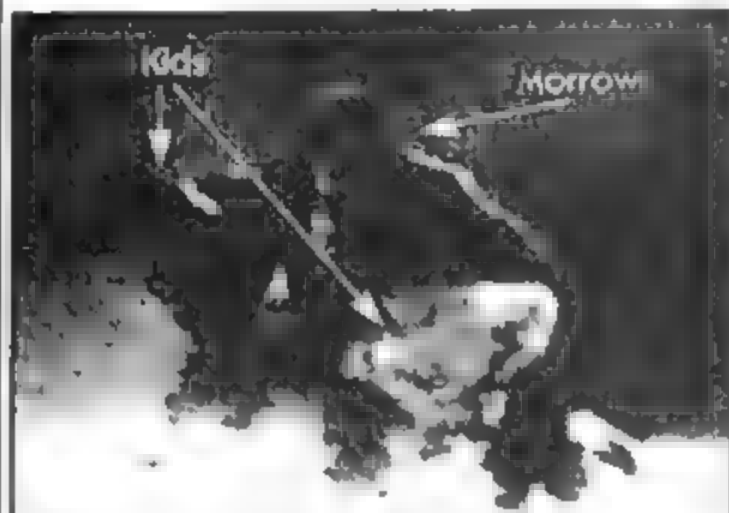
AND THE NEW K-MART LINE OF GRUNGEWEAR!



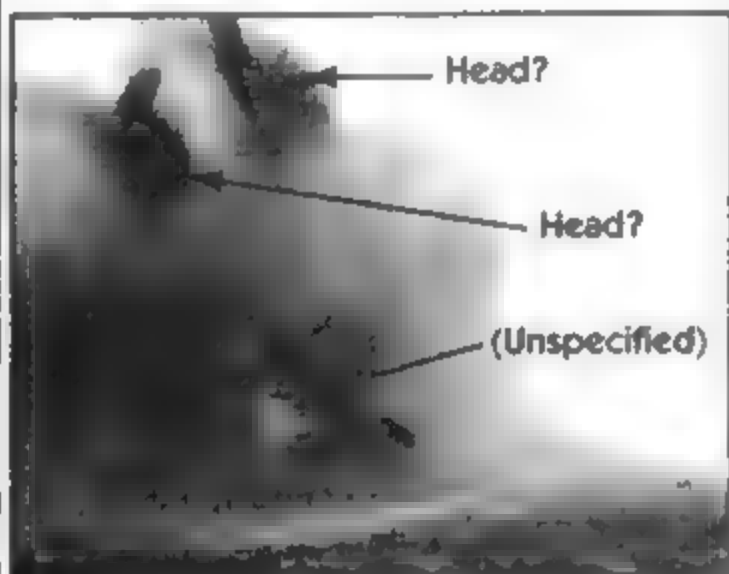
STILL FRAME

THE VIC MORROW TRAGEDY

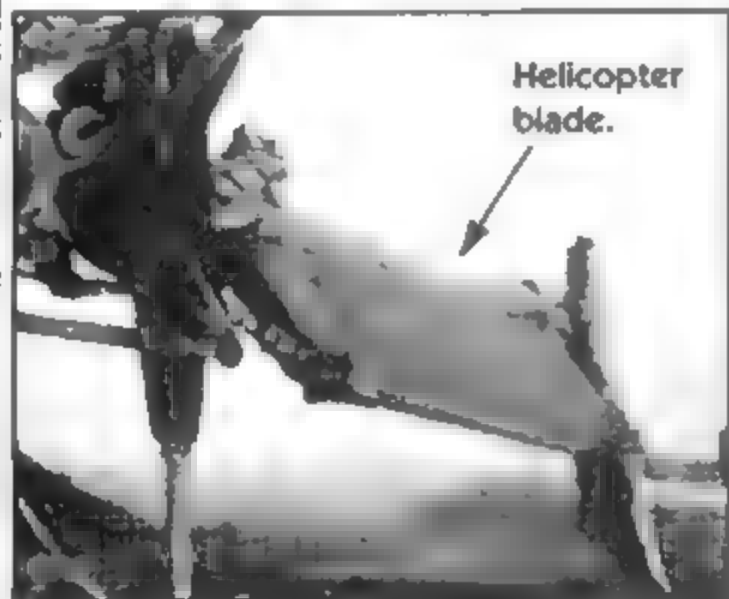
FROM DEATH SCENES II



- ① Morrow has great difficulty carrying both kids across the river—amidst machine gun fire and towering explosions. Suddenly, a shadow looms...



- ② WHAMI Debris thrown up by blasts damage a hovering helicopter, causing the blades to descend into the trio like a gigantic Cuisinart. (Note body parts.)



- ③ Morrow and the kids have been instantly killed: The whirling blades decapitated Vic and the boy while the girl was crushed into unrecognizable paste by the falling 'copter. **[FVG]**

themes throughout (the glaringly bad *Mary Jane*, a '60s *Reefer Madness* style anti-drug propaganda film, was quite funny) There's way too much on this tape to mention here, but I'll just say this—get it if you can. A word to the squeamish. This tape also contains three extremely sick and pantently adult segments one in which a dominatrix shoots a number of blow-darts into the posterior of a female subject as well as two other bits I'll simply refer to as "Queefing Demonstration" and "Koko the Human Toilet." Ack! —S N

CURSE OF THE FIEND

90min/Video
General Video



What's the biggest mistake in low-budget, homemade efforts that is also most prevalent, occurring in about 99% of all bad films? No, it's not bad acting, cheap effects or a poorly written script. It's sloooooooooow pacing. I'm not just talking about

editing (which is definitely at a snail's pace in this video) but actors who walk and talk like they're sinking slowly into quicksand. First-time directors, for some unexplainable fucking reason, always slow the actors down. Why must everyone seem like they've just ingested 6 or 7 Valiums? Anyways, *Curse of the Fiend*, (billed as "the scariest movie ever made!") is about some guy who practices medical experiments that basically fuck people up. Unfortunately, even on fast-scan, nothing interesting happens. All talk, no action. According to the propaganda sent with the tape, General Pictures is a Canadian company producing and distributing "commercial movies." After viewing this sub-amateur effort, all I can say is that I agree. —D P.

BLACKLIGHT

54min/B&W and Color/Film
To let Tales



The maker of this found-footage flick, A. A. Allen, says, "It's a story about Vinnie Soroko, his buddies and their attempt to takeover the blacklight drug market in New York from Daddy Smiley—A cut-and-paste B-movie thriller." Good thing he explains it, cuz I didn't have a fucking clue what this thing was about. Similar in construction to Craig Baldwin's *Tribulation 99* (but without any of that film's incredible intelligence, humor or originality), *Blacklight* looks like a low-budget Spanish action-thriller, but with narration done in an annoying *E.T.* voice while bad industrial disco music drones on and on and on. While I think the recycling of public domain footage to create something

contemporary is great and we should see more of it. But to be successful it takes a hell of a lot more effort (and talent) than displayed in *Blacklight*. Unless the guy who made this is 8-years old, he has no excuse for this kind of crap.

—D.P.

DEATH SCENES II

84 min/B&W and Color/Film & Video
Cine-Vision



Although there's no justification for releasing the mindless collage of horrific images in this wretched sequel, I have to admit it is a hypnotic experience to watch this Carnival of Human Carnage. Unlike *Death Scenes I*, which was simply a collection of old coroner photographs, *Death Scenes II* is actual moving footage of war time casualties, building jumpers, automobile accident victims and other assorted fatalities. As a special bonus the tape includes extensive footage of the Vic Morrow/John Landis/helicopter affair and the news conference during which Pennsylvania public official Bud Dwyer shot himself through the head on live TV. I had never seen so much blood drain from one person. This video is stupid, pointless, vomitous, unartistic and moronic. Its "director," Nick Bougas, should be hunted down and killed like a dumb animal for releasing it to the general public. *Yes Sir! I liked it!* —K B.

For more info on items reviewed in SCAN, turn to the classified section.

(Page 58)

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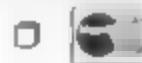
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7/24/92



The Censorship Lady: Mary Avera the Secretary of the Maryland State Censor Board gets choked up over the outrages of John Waters. (Photo from his book, *SHOCK VALUE*.)

I AM WITH THE BANNED

BY CHRISTIAN GORE

There's really no such thing as a "banned" film in the United

States—at least not in the age of video. That clear plastic rectangular case filled with magnetic tape has made available (or at least possible to

acquire) everything the powers that be don't want you to see. And there's always that mystique of

standing accused. Being banned is cool. It adds an exciting exotic

quality to a film or personality. C'mon, where would Frank Zappa be without Tipper Gore? *Married with Children* without Terry Rakolta? Jello Biafra without the

F.B.I.? Todd Haynes without Donald Wildmon? Or Nick Zedd without FILM THREAT?

There are many ways to dodge censorship in America... and there are even more ways to get your grimy hands on banned videos.



THE YOUNG AND THE BOOTLEGS

When I was an annoying brat in the '70s, I always watched any movie that had that scary warning at the beginning: "Some material may be unsuitable for young viewers. Parental discretion is advised." I'd close the door to make sure mom wouldn't walk in, so I could delight in the viewing of something "I shouldn't see."

With money saved from my paper route, I was able to buy my first VCR when I was 14 years old. This was in the early '80s, when VCRs were luxury items at \$1,000 a pop and not a common household necessity. Even then I was able to obtain bootlegs of *Star Wars* and other flicks from the few friends who also owned video recorders.

The same holds true today: If it exists on film, you can get it on video. It may not be the easiest thing to find, but it is out there somewhere. In fact, the only good thing about living in the Big Apple is that you can often find bootleg copies of theatrical films *before* they are released, as in the recent cases of Martin Scorsese's *Goodfellas* and Spike Lee's *Malcolm X*. (Lee had his own "Bat Squad," so named because they carried baseball bats, out on the streets of New York looking for unauthorized pre-release copies of *X*.)

I am NOT, by any means, condoning the sale of bootleg videos. But, if something is not available legally, what's a videophile to do?

Where as devoted collectors scour even the most sleazy avenues to

Sam and Ted Raimi clown behind the scenes of Scott Spiegel's *Immortal* — which Paramount ravaged with cuts.

uncover that lost treasure, the average movie consumer is lazy and ingests the crop of mainstream flicks and vids offered to them. It's like eating burgers at McDonald's, you chow down without any thought as to whether they truly taste good or not. In fact, the American public's tastebuds have become so numb they actually think they're getting quality entertainment every time they go to the movies, watch cable TV or rent videos straight off the "new releases" shelf.

TRY TO CENSOR ME, PLEASE!

Filmmakers working for the major studios like to whine when they have to cut their

pictures to secure a certain rating. Of course they love to cry "censorship!" It makes great headlines, giving free publicity to a film that is going to open theatrically and have the opportunity to be seen by millions regardless of how many groups bitch due simply to the sheer mountains of money at stake. Take *Basic Instinct*, for example. Here's a bad erotic thriller that undeservedly raked in huge box office merely because it caused controversy over objectionable content (and we're not talking a sagging ass and a weak script). No, the term "banned" is a ploy to sell movie tickets and videos.

Hey, if I could get my latest film, *Red*, "officially"

banned, I would. (The next batch of video sleeves declaring "BANNED in 15 Countries!" sure would help sales skyrocket.) It's not likely to happen. Although, to a certain degree, the film *is* banned (or at least hard-to-find) because most major video rental chains won't carry it. It's only when independent films make money that they are acknowledged.

Why is the media is so concerned with "The Top 10 Grossing Films?" "Top" has little to do with quality. That's where independent films and videos become a threat. Every time an indy-produced film sells a video, that's LESS money spent on a major title.

More importantly, what this means is that "censorship" or "banning" of films occurs at the level of distribution. The independent and so-called underground product is restricted



Director Dario Argento's response upon hearing his film *Opera* had been released uncut in the U.S.: "No, really?"

BANNED WAGON

BY GRAHAM RAE

Sure, American moviegoers have to endure cut-up specialist Jack Valenti's MPAA Ratings Board. But when it comes to cinematic circumcision, it could be worse—you could live in the U.K.

Picture this for a typically Orwellian scenario: Your home is raided by authorities in search of contraband video tapes. You risk fines, confiscation of your video equipment and even a jail sentence. Your crime? Watching uncertified horror videos. Where does all this shit go down? Yugoslavia? Russia? Nope, Great (hah!) Britain.

You may have heard about England's 1983 "Video Nasty" scare, but let's recap: After a campaign of melodrama, misinformation and bullshit by Parliament, pressure groups and gutter-press rags, the Video Recordings Act made it illegal

to own video tapes uncertified by the British Board of Film Censors (who later changed the last word in their title to "Classification" in a shut-semantics attempt to disguise their purpose). Perverse pornography and extremely violent films were especially targeted, resulting in a rash of videotape burnings and prosecutions against video retailers.

The raids have been happening with depressing regularity over the last few years, but the latest round on July 5, 1992 have been the most insidious. They occurred in several English towns after police (posing as horror video

hounds) amassed evidence on dozens of fans through correspondence. In an

atavistic reminder of 1983, the tabloid press threw up their hands in mock-shock and fed their lobotomized readers tales of "child pornography" and "snuff movies" (even though the officer in charge of the covert taxpayer-financed charade admitted that no "snuff" films had ever been found in Britain). This is the most worrying factor: That legitimate horror fans should be lumped together with the dregs of humanity. It's obvious that this "snuff" and "child pornography" talk is just an official smoke-screen to justify the expense involved in these operations. Can you imagine some red-faced piggy in front of a nationwide press conference confessing that they were stepping up the hunt for psychos who have the original version of *The*

Evil Dead which contains a minute more gore footage than the 1991 re-



IN SEARCH OF...



Did you miss that 3 a.m. screening of WRESTLING WOMEN VS. THE SMOG MONSTER or the letterboxed version of DRACULA AND THE SEVEN GOLDEN VAMPIRES? Well, you may yet get another chance by using these clues to find schlock films on television.

BY
VERONICA
LODGE

For every movie available on home video, there are dozens more yet to be released in that medium. Many of these are films from the '50s and '60s that do not meet distributors' definition of "classics" as well as lesser known titles from the '70s that missed the boat when video stores started popping up in the early '80s.

If your favorite movie hasn't been released on video, there are ways to track it down.

- *If it was shown on television recently:* Call the station and ask for the programming department. They are there to help you. Before you call,

release? Or grainy eighth-generation copies of *Nekromantik* and *Weasels Rip My Flesh*?

But add a hint of child pornography or real death to the rumor mill—and *voilà!*—they have a carte blanche to step on the toes of whoever they need to.

Religion is a big tie-in. The God-botherers would love a sin-free world (pity so few live up to their pious prattlings). But ask yourself, who caused the deaths of more people? Jorg Büttgereit or Jesus Christ? George Romero or George Bush? These films are attacked because they're easy to crush.

It would be funny if it wasn't so sad. Most of the "nasties" were shitty films (like *Snuff* and *Beast in Heat*) that might have enjoyed only an ephemeral moment of video glory if the tabloids hadn't rendered them *cause celebres*. Tabloids like *The Sport* (a paper with headlines like "Vile Rape Beast Forced Pretty Young Blonde to Suck His Cock Before He Stuck It Up Her Arse") ranted about films like *Anthropophagous the Beast*, but how many can even remember that piece of shit? Hypocrisy rules in the insane tabloid kingdom: They cover

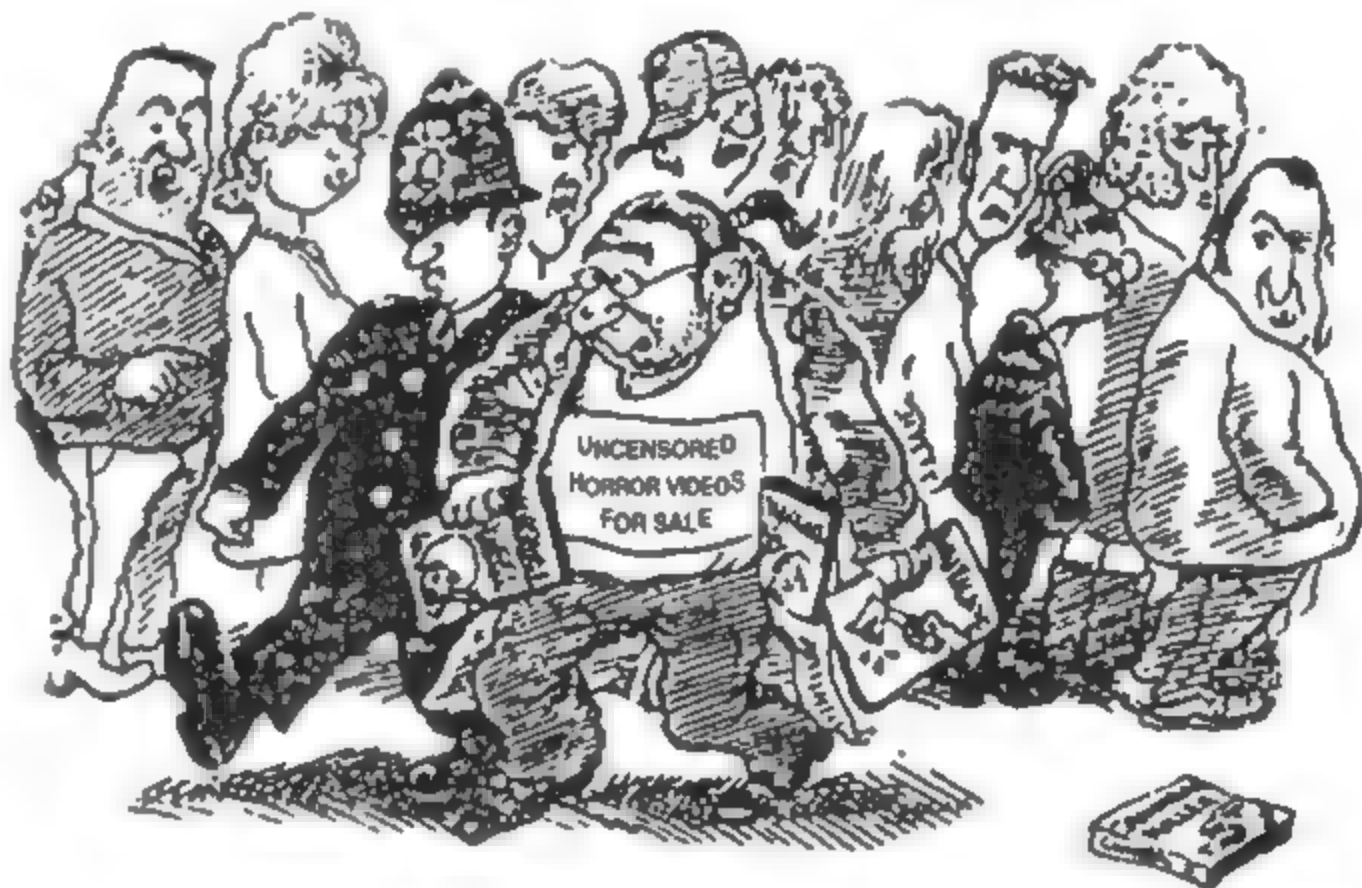


films like *Cape Fear* and *Basic Instinct*, then run stories asking if these same films should be banned!

But the big Hollywood shockers are never going the way of *Zombie Flesheaters* (aka *Zombie*). There is just too much money and studio power behind *Terminator 2* (which got the British equivalent of the PG-13 rating!) and its ilk. Big back-handers to the censor board, no doubt

The rot is already beginning to set in the good old U.S. of A., albeit in a more subtle fashion. Witness the decision by many video companies not to release unrated versions of films and the contractual obligations on directors to deliver R-rated product. And although it hasn't reached the stage of police raids in your country yet, don't wait until you're arrested for having *Cannibal Holocaust*—act now. Write letters. Make films. Bare your genitals. Do something. **FTVG**

Graham Rae resides in Scotland and annoys the FTVG staff with rants about his favorite band Screeching Weasel.



have the following prepared: The complete title (it must be exactly as it's shown on the credits; Leonard Maltin's *TV Movies and Video Guide* is good for this); the year it was released; the date and time it was shown on that station (if you can't get the exact date give a close approximation) and the kind of movie it was (comedy, horror, drama, etc.). The programming director will be able to tell you when it will be aired again on that station, or, if it won't air again, the phone number of the picture's distributor. They may be able to inform you as to when the movie will be aired again and by what station.

Here's a list of phone numbers for cable stations that occasionally broadcast hard-to-find titles:

A&E (212) 661-4500
 AMC and Bravo (516) 364-2222
 Disney (818) 569-7700
 Encore (303) 771-7700
 Family (804) 523-7301
 HBO/Cinemax (800) 426-3474
 Nostalgia (703) 212-9000
 TBS (404) 827-1717
 TNT (404) 827-1647
 WGN (312) 528-2311

• *If it hasn't been on television for a while or at all:* Many movies may be in limbo for years, not showing

on television, cable or in revival theaters. The Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences, through the Margaret Herrick Library, has a special phone number [(310) 247-3020] for reference questions. They can tell you who currently owns the distribution rights or at least give you a lead. Remember, the more specific information you give them, the better they can answer your questions. **FTVG**

Veronica Lodge works at a company specializing in obtaining and copy-righting films not yet available on video.

WANTED: DEAD AND ALIVE

BY TOM BROWN

Unlike most whiny filmobolics, here's a fan who actually set out to distribute—legally—the once impossible (and still hard) to find DOCUMENT OF THE DEAD.

I first learned about *Document of the Dead*, the documentary about the making of George Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* directed by Roy Frumkes (writer/producer of *Street Trash*), from reading *Fangoria*. I contacted *Day of the Dead* cinematographer Mike Gornick who I met as a zombie extra during filming of the third *Dead* installment in hopes of seeing it. He kindly put me in touch with Frumkes whom I bugged until he agreed to send me a dub. Perhaps he was amused by my enthusiasm or (more likely) he began to see some commercial possibilities lurking on the horizon.

Regardless, he sent me the movie that Romero fans would blow a fire-hydrant to see. Nearly ten years after its inception as a student film project, *Document of the Dead* was practically a mythical movie. It was difficult to see unless a twentieth generation bootleg was satisfactory.

It was everything I hoped it would be: slick, informative and highly entertaining. Included were tons of behind-the-scenes interviews and footage. The legendary Calgon commercial alone was worth owning the tape.

I had a video that Romero fans deserved and needed to see. The tape could easily be duped and bring in a tidy profit, but I didn't even consider it. Instead, I worked with

Frumkes, who was willing to let the movie go reasonably, to get the rights in order to legally release the film. That was in 1988, ten years since *Dawn* and twenty years since *Night of the Living Dead*.

I pondered how to distribute *Document*. Selling it mail order came to mind. I had a partner who could put up the money, but wasn't quite convinced that *Document* could make a profit. So I opted to sell the video rights to an existing distributor. MPI in Chicago, the folks that had put out such gems as *Faces of Death*, seemed like a suitable company.

The gentleman behind the big desk at MPI watched just fifteen minutes of *Document* before leaving the room and returning with another man who also watched with great interest. Halfway through they shut it off and made an offer on the spot. I reached Frumkes later that afternoon and, although he was pleased, he didn't want to rush into anything. There were things to be considered, territorial rights among the most important.

The next weeks were agonizing as Roy and MPI played phone tag. I would hear from MPI that Roy was slow in getting material to them and returning calls—as if I could do something about it! Roy would explain to me that things were quite complicated on his end and he was

taking his time. MPI wasn't as patient. I think they saw the film's potential and wanted to gobble it up fast.

Unfortunately, things came to a grinding halt because of a problem with not taking out "Errors & Omissions" insurance for the film. Neither side wanted to pay for it and negotiations died.

Document was eventually released, along with a nifty addendum shot on the set of *Two Evil Eyes*, but failed miserably as a sale-through item. I believe the high retail price had something to do with it since documentaries rarely sell for "A" title prices. To be honest, I have never seen the video on shelves anywhere. It's out there somewhere, anyhow. The releasing company, Studio Entertainment, is now out of business. I dare say that the strikingly-packaged film is again an obscure collector's item. JTVG

Tom Brown is currently producing the official 25th anniversary Night of the Living Dead collector's video, due out later this year and featuring interviews with Romero and Tom Savini.

Flanked by Romero, the author (center) did his duty as an extra in *DAY OF THE DEAD*.





AUSTRALIA/ NEW ZEALAND

The Commonwealth Film Censorship Board classifies films on behalf of the State/Territories.

CLASSIFICATIONS:

G—For General Exhibition (all ages)
PG—Parental Guidance (parental guidance recommended for children under 15 years)
M—For Mature Audiences (recommended as suitable for persons 15 years or older)
R—For Restricted Exhibition (18 and older)
 Films Board of Review hears appeals. State of Queensland has its own Films Board of Review which has more stringent views than the federal board

CENSORSHIP FEES

\$A35 per title except in Victoria
 \$A10 plus \$A5 per reel

The state-sponsored censors Down Under have continued to battle John McNaughton over his long-completed *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* pending unspecified cuts in the film. The picture's Australian distributor, Dendy Films began in early 1992 to prepare an appeal to the ban invoked by the Office of Film and Literature Classification. An official statement released by the said government board suggests only that the "film's depictions and concepts of violence" caused the ban

FRANCE

The *Commissariat Centrale* (a censorship commission of 22 members) judges whether a film will be granted a *visa d'exploitation* (exhibition visa)

CLASSIFICATIONS:

Open to general public
 No admittance under 13 years
 No admittance under 18 years
 X-rated (hardcore violence or porno)
 Reasons must be given for all decisions, and if producer is permitted under contract with distributor, modifications may be made to meet CNC standards

CENSORSHIP FEES

10 francs per meter (35mm)
 25 francs per meter (16mm)



MAP TO GLOBAL CINEMATIC OPPRESSION

coming into England, they announce their intention to destroy it, unless you claim it. However, if you do claim it, they start legal proceedings against you

- Brits face a possible jail sentence for bringing the likes of *Cannibal Holocaust* and *Faces of Death* into England

• Several of the original "nauses" were already cut for release (*Wuthen's Pleb For Frankenstein*), and still others have recently been re-released in butchered forms (*Zombie Plagues*, *House by the Cemetery*)

- Featuring an advertisement for LSD, *The Trip* (1967), the kooky drugathon starring Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper, remains banned on film and video

- You can see *The Exorcist* (1973) at a theater in England, but not at home
- Mega violent movies like *Death Wish* (1974) and *Abel Ferrara's Driller Killer* (1979) disturb the British Board of Film Classification. "We're worried about the process of violence when it's a turn-on"
- Stephen Frears' 1987 *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* stirs controversy as title is shortened to the non-threatening *Sammy and Rosie* for U.S. ads

ITALY

The Commission of the Ministry of Entertainment classifies films with special attention to explicit sex scenes, in these categories:

- General admittance
- No admittance under 14
- 18 years and over

CENSORSHIP FEES

102 lire per meter

After a highly decried restructuring of the Film Ratings Board in Italy, many producers and directors suspect a natural censorship agenda is forming in the boozed-up nation. While bluer foreign movies like *Cape Fear* and *9 1/2 Weeks* can be shown on free Italian TV any time after 10:30 p.m., the critically hailed *Best Friends*, which honestly deals with the effects of incest on a young lady's life and contains no bloodshed or sex scenes, has received the same highly restrictive ban that is bestowed on many of Italy's most notorious porno movies. In response to the protests of the ban by the Italian media, the PRB issued a statement citing the "objectionable themes" brought up in *Best Friends*. The case is being appealed

• Director Dario Argento, who enjoys a flashy "rock star" image in his homeland and is arguably the most regularly censored director in modern screen history, remarks, "It's like they are killing my children"

JAPAN

Censorship regulations apply to frontal nudity (pubic hair) and excessive violence



CLASSIFICATIONS:

R—Over 15 years
X—Over 18 years

CENSORSHIP FEES

85 yen per meter

After leaving office and touring Japan, ex-Bonzo caretaker Ronald Reagan said of the Japanese acquisition of Columbia Pictures, "I'm not too proud of Hollywood these days with the immorality that is shown in pictures and the vulgarity. I just have a feeling that maybe Hollywood needs

some outsiders to bring back decency and good taste to some of the pictures being made."

Almost immediately, Reagan, whose post-White House residence is in the heart of Tinseltown, came under fire, taking shots from both infuriated buy-America pundits and pissed Southern California creative-types alike. The Gipper later apologized

• The unluckiest cut of all: *In the Realm of the Senses* (1976) is explicit, controversial and features own shears when it comes to sex scenes—but was still banned

SWEDEN

All films must be submitted to the Swedish Film Censor Board. Films cannot show "horrifying character" or conflict with public morals and law.

CLASSIFICATIONS ARE BY COLOR:

White—Rejected
Yellow—15 years and older
Green—11 years and older
Blue—17 years and older
Red—General audiences

CENSORSHIP FEES

55 kronor per 50 meters for the first print and 19 kronor per 50 meters for each subsequent print

- In 1977, *Star Wars* is restricted for audiences under 14-years of age as the cantina arm severing scene is deemed too graphic for children
- In 1987 John McTiernan's action pic *Predator* faced an unconditional ban in Sweden, perhaps for some of the reasons listed above. When the film's Distributor, 20th Century Fox, made the necessary cuts, the ban was repealed



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CANADA



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BELGIUM



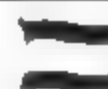
Vase de Noces (aka *The Pig Fucking Horse*) depicting bestial pornography has been stopped from being screened on occasion.

IRELAND



In 1987, Ireland's Film Censorship Board banned *Personal Services*, a film about London prostitute Cynthia Payne, nicknamed "Madame Cyn." Directed by Monty Python alum Terry Jones, it was made with full approval from Ms. Payne and continues to be available in video stores throughout England.

SPAIN



L'Age d'Or (1930), *Nazarin* (1958) and *Viridiana* (1961) establish permanent rift between "anti-religious" filmmaker Luis Buñuel and the Catholic Church.

MEXICO



A victim of cultural oppression by its powerful northern neighbor, Mexican cinema has reverted to pale imitations of Hollywood-style action and sex films—though often of much higher octane. Body and bedded babe counts often soar as the consumers demand more of the same.

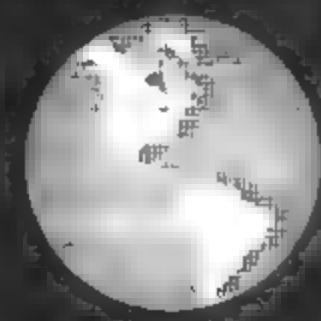
TUNISIA



This Arab nation has recently become a bastion of liberal ideas when it comes to filmic expression. For instance, *Halface*, *the Boy of the Terraces*, which deals with a boy's sexual awakening. The subject matter, once considered taboo, was discussed in a very positive light by the parliament, which debates the fates of all controversial Tunisian movies. *Halface* saw an unrestricted release in March of 1992, and became the highest grossing picture in Tunisian history.

WORLD

CINEMATIC OPPRESSION



FINLAND



The Fins have adopted a simple numeric classification system:

- 1—General public
- 2—Forbidden under 8
- 3—Forbidden under 12
- 4—Forbidden under 16
- 5—Forbidden under 18

CENSORSHIP FEES

45 Finnish marks per meter

COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES



Even before the disintegration of the Soviet Union, *glasnost* thawed this country's repressive system. Anyone with a VCR (usually smuggled in from the West) was considered a theatre owner—spawning thousands of 20-seat venues and a massive porn video black market.

HONG KONG



The Film Censorship Board does not impose age limit standards, although films must conform to certain standards. However, John Woo's ultra-violent gangster epics prove that excessive violence doesn't seem to be a problem.

CENSORSHIP FEES:

\$HK9 per meter (35mm)

CHINA



The Chinese are actually quite puritanical when it comes to film ratings. Although they lack a formal motion picture censoring body, the Government forced Bernardo Bertolucci to heavily trim his epic, Sino-lensed biopic *The Last Emperor*. Even the Warner Bros. version of *Superman* was banned in 1986 because its hero "reversed the flow of time" which promoted "impossible idealism in young viewers."

THE PHILIPPINES



• *Uhaw Na Dagat* (1981) features naked dwarves, incest, a satanic pirate and bestiality. Not surprisingly it was heavily censored for its release.
• *Macho Dancer* (1985), about a young homosexual male stripper, was banned by the government and its maker, Lino Brocka, was imprisoned for being a dissident.

CAUTION: Unbend staples and CAREFULLY remove map to avoid tearing!

Of France's Ratings system, filmmaker Jean-Jacques Annaud (*The Lover*) stated "X means it's an exploitation picture." Annaud went on to say of the MPAA's system, "I'm afraid the NC-17 label will give (*The Lover*) a bad taste. The American public thinks NC-17 is just another X." Annaud subsequently cut 12 minutes off of his picture, which was distributed by MGM domestically, to get an elusive R rating.

UNITED GERMANY

Censorship is voluntary and films are classified by a professional Review Committee, *Fremdliche Selbstkontrolle der Filmwirtschaft* (FSK). The Committee is liberal except with respect to films in variance with the laws of the Constitution and films offensive to religious beliefs.

• Today, many Nazi era films are prohibited from being screened

• In Germany, it's illegal to screen any of the *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* movies

• *Nekromantik 2* prints are seized in a Munich raid (1992). Court orders negatives and all prints destroyed even before a hearing or trial. Director Jörg Buttgerieck and producer Manfred Jelinski are criminally charged with "propagating violence" for distributing the films and Buttgerieck faces additional charges for "participating in the film's production as the director." Prosecutors fined for putting on show. Prosecution is later suspended but film remains in distribution limbo within Germany

GREAT BRITAIN/IRELAND



Films must be submitted to the British Board of Film Classification administered by the trade through the Kinematograph Manufacturers Assn.

CATCORN

U—Restricted

PG—Parental Guidance Recommended (15 and 18—minimum admission age)

Local councils may overrule any of the board's decisions on appeal

Films are excluded from the provisions of the Obscene Publications Act, as is broadcasting, although the Conservative government is expected to change that allowance

CENSORSHIP FEE:

£400-500, exact fee being determined by length of film

The total ban of the American import *Full Metal Jacket* reinforces the growing suspicions that the Classification Board is almost unreasonably strict when it comes to regulations on foreign films. If British customs seize a copy of a questionable film

• Incredibly, the Supreme Court ruled in 1915 that motion pictures were not protected under the First Amendment. The ruling was overturned in 1952, under a court appointed by and large by movie buff Franklin D. Roosevelt. In later years, after the Protection Code gave way to the MPAA ratings system, Richard Nixon was quoted after seeing *Love Story* as saying he was shocked "by the dialogue they put in the girl's mouth."

• The National Board of Censorship of Motion Pictures is established in 1909. Their motto: "Selection, not censorship." In 1915, the non-governmental organization changes its name to the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures.

• Despite major box-office pull and white power semantics, DW Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) was banned more often than any other film in motion picture history. Its right to be screened is known to have been challenged in well over 100 incidents in and out of court. This racist film was recently added to the Library of Congress Film Preservation list

• The Hays Code "Don'ts and Be Carefuls" included profanity, nudity, drug trafficking, sex perversion, white slavery, miscegenation, sex hygiene, venereal diseases, scenes of actual childbirth, children's sex organs, ridicule of the clergy, and offenses against a nation, race, or creed

• Tod Browning's *Freaks* (1932) undergoes various cuts due to its intense, unflinching depiction of real-life human oddities. The film isn't screened in England until 1963.

• Code administrator Joe Breen almost alters *Gone With the Wind* line "Frankly my dear, I don't give a damn" to "My dear, I don't care." (1939)

• Billboards for Howard Hughes' *The Outlaw* (1943) featuring the bountiful attributes of star Jane Russell prompted San Francisco police to prepare warrants for the arrest of Hughes

• The original cop killer: Code amendment erases a 12 year ban of on-screen cop-killing with *Detective Story* (1951) starring Kirk Douglas.

• Irving Klaw is called before a Senate sub-committee for producing bondage films starring Betty Page. (1955)

• The script for *The Bad Seed* (1956) was initially rejected as being in violation of the "Special Regulations on Crime," Section 12: Pictures dealing with criminal activities, in which minors participate, or to which minors are related, shall not be approved if they incite demoralizing imitation on the part of youth.

• *Midnight Cowboy* (1969) first and only X-rated picture to win an Oscar. Later re-released with "R" rating without a single cut.

• Russ Meyer's *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* (1970), once available from CBS/Fox Video, has been withdrawn from circulation by the embarrassed company (and the MPAA's refusal to reclassify the film to an R rating). Meyer's attempt to purchase the rights have proved financially unfeasible.

• *Deep Throat* is banned in various states despite that it was chic for couples to attend porno flicks. (1972)

• John Waters' *Pink Flamingoes* (1972) added of chicken-fucking, blow job and artificial insemination scenes by secretary of the Maryland State Censor Board, Mary Avara. Shit-eating left in, however.

• *Last Tango in Paris* (1973) creates new and better uses for butter as well as airs up debate as a big-time actor (Brando) gets naked for X-rated art.

• July 1, 1984: PG-13 introduced. There's still no evidence to prove the rumor that this new rating was created especially for the Spielberg's violent adventure romp *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*.

• Losing our religion: Godard's *Hail Mary* (1985) is condemned by the Pope; Scorese appears on *Nightline*

defending *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988) from Catholic protests.

• The art film again joins the censorship foray when Peter Greenaway's *The Cook, The Thief, The Wife and Her Lover* (1990) is condemned for scenes of perversity. Film released unrated.

• Spanish director Pedro Almodovar, linked by the MPAA's proposed cuts in *Tie Me Up, Tie Me Down!*, says, "I feel it is the same kind of lie that I used to know when I was in Spain under Franco. It's that kind of fascist technique. I'm fed up with this kind of hypocrisy. I really would like someone to tell me 'you have to cut this' and start a real fight." Miramax releases the film uncut and unrated. (1990)

• September 27, 1990: X category is changed to NC-17. According to the MPAA, "NC-17 (No children under the age of 17 will be admitted) does not necessarily mean 'obscene or pornographic' in the oft-accepted meaning of those words. The Board does not and cannot mark films with those words. These are legal terms and for courts to decide. The reasons for the application of an NC-17 rating can mean strong violence or sex or aberrational behavior or drug abuse or any other element which, when present, most parents would want to be off-limits for viewing by their children." *Henry & June* (1990) is first to get the rating

• *Basic Instinct* (1992) wallows in controversy for supposed scenes of steamy sex. Michael Douglas' sagging ass proves that some shots should be cut due to excessive horror.

• After almost being lost in direct-to-video limbo, Abel Ferrara's NC-17 cut of *Bad Lieutenant* is released. (1992)

• Madonna continues to impose herself into the libidos of America with *Body of Evidence* (preceded by the beat-off book, *Sex*, and soft-core porn record *Erotica*). Though people are shocked, there's no talk about banning the film. In fact, no one seems to care.

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BANNED FIRST HAND

AN INTERVIEW WITH TODD HAYNES

by David E. Williams

TODD HAYNES' 1987 LABOR OF

love, *Supersize: The Karen Carpenter Story*, is a study of the budding pop singer's life and career, which was effectively silenced by surviving

However, *Supersize* still enjoys a wide black market distribution and is considered one of the best-known student films ever made.

Haynes (producer and film photographer) to pursue further projects as Apparatus

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Rev. Wildmon, et cetera. In some people's eyes, Haynes should do some serious prison time—perhaps for traumatizing their holier-than-thou souls. But what have all their protests produced? The kind of advertising money can't buy—the kind that has since propelled Haynes' career, one born to controversy, beyond the realm of typical.

*In **Superstar** and **Poison**, you deal with religion, anorexia, homosexuality and AIDS—touchy subjects. Do you ever feel pressure from the people who have the money you need?*

No, because I've continued despite the problems that I've faced. I think ultimately this notion of censorship is some sort of a constructed idea that is both sort of true and not true. It's not true that we cannot approach certain topics without being shut up or silenced. That's certainly not my experience and it's not what I see around me. It's a little more complicated. I have some serious problems and concerns about certain topics, which are the source of incredible anxiety in some people, and they react accordingly—but it's not the simple silencing of those topics that we have in this country. Instead, it's at the point of exhibition and distribution where I've had problems come up and people's resistance voiced. Even when I applied to the National Endowment for the Arts to get production money for *Poison*. I didn't have any problem getting the grant to begin with and it was only after the film was finished that problems arose.

Do you credit the controversy for the success of the film?

Undoubtedly. Without a doubt it helped, but that didn't excite me at first. I was disturbed that *Poison's* involvement in this particular case could worsen the situation for others. In terms of the film itself, though, I knew that the problems would push it into a much wider mainstream visibility and that our distribution could expand with the curiosity level.

More mainstream critics would be forced to comment on it, either praise it or castigate it, and give it that "stamp of approval." So you really saw the benefit of this...

Exposure. I wasn't sure that *Poison* was right for that kind of attention. When I was finishing the film, I thought, "This is something I believe in," but I also knew that it's not for everyone out there. Not because of the sexual material, but because of the structure of the film. The attempt to really play around with these three different gen-

res and intercut them. I thought that would alienate a lot of people—it was an art film, and it excluded a lot people's interests by the very way it was put together. I was also a little worried about how the film would hold up in that kind of larger spotlight. And I

was surprised to find for the most part that it did really well. It also surprised me how well it translated in certain states where I never expected it to, like in the South, where it was really well received. I learned a lot about this notion of the "mainstream American filmgoer" and I think that we often underestimate the fact that people do want to see different work.



SUPERSTAR's perfect cast: They're swell, they're made by Mattel.

You put your blood, sweat and tears into doing something that's supposedly obscene, disgusting and should have never been committed to film. Did you wonder, 'Is there something wrong with me?'

No, but it certainly helped that Donald Wildmon, the main instigator of the attack, the source of all the criticism, the person who started the entire thing going, also openly admitted to never seeing my film. And when people in his camp did see it, they had to find something else to say about it other than it was a piece of pornography. Because it just wasn't. If they disliked it, they'd have to find a more subtle—and more interesting—criticism.

How did the shit actually hit the fan at the NEA?

The Biograph Theatre in Washington, D.C., which wasn't going to be opening *Poison* for several weeks, had several public screenings and people from the House and Senate

went. There were some wonderful quotes in the *Washington Times*, a conservative paper in D.C. One critic said, "What makes it so dangerous is how artistic it is." She also called me the "Fellini of fellatio." It's a great compliment, wouldn't you say? Somebody else said, "It made me want to bathe in Clorox."

"[One critic] called me the 'Fellini of fellatio' It's a great compliment, wouldn't you say?"

David Cronenberg and Clive Barker have leaked subversive ideas into the mainstream—hiding them within exploitation films. Will there be more movement toward that for you?

No. In fact, my next film is exciting to me in that it does not rely on a genre in the way *Poison* or *Superstar* did, in that ironic parody aspect that creates pleasure and humor in both of those films. In *Poison*, you're reading what we know about the horror genre or the tabloid documentary against this film which is obviously being made "in the know." The same with *Superstar*—you can laugh along with its comments on the star story genre.

"It's almost a romantic term, censorship. It's almost like we wish we had censorship in this country."

Do you have any boundaries with gay-themed ideas?

I don't have any built-in self-censorship, but it's not a theme that crops up in all the projects that I want to do either. But when it comes to anything that is explicitly homosexual, I don't care. I know there will be some resistance but there will also be an immediate audience for that film. I'm beginning to write a film about glam rock with James Lyons, who worked on *Poison*, which will definitely concern homosexuality as well. So that'll be a nice change, but I think the only projects that set up restrictions are life stories. Again, like the *Superstar* problem. There are things I would like to do about certain people, but I know the rights problems would be too complicated

*How did you feel about the pressure on Richard Carpenter to ease up on *Superstar* and allow it to be seen?*

Critical reaction to *Poison* inspired the letter by Owen Gleiberman [*Entertainment Weekly's* pompous ass critic who should pull his head out—Ed.], who also wrote a pretty nasty review of the film. So, I was on the one hand disgruntled about the review, but I was very happy about the show of support. I feel like his opinion is shared by a lot of critics and filmgoers who were lucky enough to see *Superstar* when it was around. It also spurred an *Entertainment Tonight* piece, a follow-up story in which Mary Hart announced, "A new movement has arisen to try and rescue the film *Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story*." I was like, wow, a *movement*. [laugh] I didn't realize it was such a big deal. They interviewed me and they tried to get Carpenter, but he declined. He eventually did write a rebuttal letter that was printed in *EW*—which definitely irked me.

Do you have Gleiberman's letter framed on your wall?

No, I don't. [laugh] If he had given *Poison* a really good review, perhaps I would.

Richard Carpenter's rebuttal was that you asked for permission to use the songs and he declined.

I'm not a reckless kind of filmmaker by nature. If I really had anticipated this kind of reaction, I probably would have planned some legal strategy at the beginning. I might have pursued a relationship or discussion with the Carpenter estate. But I really just thought this was a completely underground film. They got wind of the project completely accidentally when I contacted the publishing company for one of the songs in the film.

Cynthia Snyder, who cowrote the film, and I decided to at least approach the publishing companies of the songs involved. We knew that we would have a very hard time securing rights, although in some cases we got them. Like we got permission to use "Philadelphia Freedom" by Elton John and "Alone Again, Naturally" by Gilbert O'Sullivan. The only song composed by Richard Carpenter that I used in the film was "Top of the World." So they immediately wanted to know what [the film] was about and what was going on. So that's how he heard about the film before I was really ready to present it to them in any serious way. I was caught off guard. It was done poorly. And when they heard that I wanted to show it at festivals and allow it to have a normal, struggling life as an underground film, which I thought was the most I could hope for, they said, "No, absolutely not." But I was basically already done with it when this came about. So I finished the film and showed it at a couple of clubs in New York downtown. I was very surprised when the press picked up on it and took it to a much wider visibility than I thought was possible.

*Have you thought of excising the song and re-releasing *Superstar*?*

There's just absolutely no way. The film is about Karen Carpenter's voice as much as it's about anything else. And I love that music. I love her voice. And I wouldn't change it that way. I do hope that someday there could be some way that we could negotiate some agreeable condition in which the film could be shown. When they first came to me in 1990 with the official cease and desist letter, I asked if the film could at least be shown non-theatrically. The film had a life in anorexia clinics.

Doctors, nurses and anorexia experts would use it in discussions and workshops and so forth. I had all these letters of support from doctors and hospitals. [laugh] I also told them I would gladly give all the rental monies and any proceeds from the film directly to the Karen Carpenter Memorial Foundation, which was exclusively set up for anorexia research. And Richard said, "No way, absolutely not!" I thought that was about as fair an offer as I could make. It's not like I'm making money off it.

What do you think of the film's underground, bootleg distribution?

I've agreed to do everything I can to keep

Haynes in his earlier, more reckless days.



the bootleg distribution down. On the one hand, I feel it's the only way for people to see the film. Great, for know [laugh] I'm not involved—it exists outside of my control. It's a rotten way to see it.

*So you're not involved in *Poison* being shown in theaters?*

Yeah. [laugh] And I can't even convincingly explain to you why they are different because it was a part of a marketing strategy on the part of Fox/Lorber, the distributor.

They felt that it was really important to do everything they possibly could to get an R rating for the film because Blockbuster will not carry an NC-17 film and on very rare occasions will they carry a film that is unrated.

What's the exception for unrating?

It's completely subjective. They look at the film and they feel that's okay, they'll do it. I think one of the hardest things about the video market right now, something that I really learned dealing with this company, is that they changed their minds hourly about how to push *Poison*. There are no rules, or they change all the time. One of the first films that got the NC-17, *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*, is held up as one of the most successful selling videos, in terms of art films. But it wasn't edited; they released it only in the original cut.

The film was like Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer in the sense that it's all pitted. There are specific bits you can cut.

That's what the MPAA said. I remember reading that. So they couldn't alter it in any way and obviously didn't show up at Blockbuster, but it still did enormously well.

There are all these contradictions that don't really hold any solid perspective. It doesn't really make any single approach clear. But delivering a version of *Poison* with an R rating was important.

How do you make you feel about your film being in the Top Total Recall box 100 weeks, double and a half times? It's ridiculous. More than that, it's that there will be the exact same, if not far more graphic, coverage of parts of bodies involved in sex in heterosexual-themed films that will get through without question. Only recently has it



SUPERSTAR: An inspiration to innumerable anorexics.

really super-sensitivity to gay representation arisen to such an extent. In *Poison*, there's this really quick flashback to the child reformatory of two inmates. You see one of them watching two boys having sex. You just see the rear-end of one guy and that was a scene they wanted me to cut out, which I refused to do even though it was interfering with an R. But I remember being, what, 7 or 8-years-old, and seeing the exact same shot in *Shampoo*—held quite a bit longer, of Warren

Beatty's butt undulating on top of Julie Christie.

Of course, you've got the double taboo—young boys and sex.

That's true. And anal sex.

Right. Well, it's the triple threat then.

[laugh] I guess you just can't compare them point-blank, but it's really ridiculous. What I found is that the limitations the MPAA imposes are also incredibly arbitrary. They saw the uncut version of *Poison*. It was unquestionably an NC-17. And they made certain suggestions to scenes that should be cut. Most of which I didn't do, although I knew that the shot of the penis in the sleeping quarter scene would have to go. That was actually in my contract, but I was prepared from the start to consider cutting that one image out from the film.

It was an extra penis [laugh] The gratuitous penis shot. The obligatory, gratuitous penis shot. The O G shot. In a heterosexual-themed film, you'd have the obligatory breast shots. Or the sneak-of-Sharon Stone's-public-hair-shot.

"If I had really anticipated this kind of reaction, I probably would have planned some legal strategy at the beginning."

So, the changes were specifically for Blockbuster because they won't except the NC-17 rating?

The changes were obviously coming from the MPAA, but the ultimate goal was for companies like Blockbuster. So, what really set me off was to see how arbitrarily these decisions are made and how ultimately subjective they are while seeming objective and consistent. And in an attempt to define moral boundaries in our society, you see how those decisions are arrived at completely subjectively. How could we have ever thought otherwise, but in the sort of close connection we had with *Poison* I saw how

that worked. Basically, the MPAA suggested several cuts to me, including the penis shot I mentioned. They wanted to get rid of the cut-aways to any flesh, although you don't see anything at all. Ultimately, they said the rape scene was just too long. So, I thought, this was all of a sudden a question of *duration*? As if by holding on this scene this many seconds as supposed to that many seconds, our minds would wander too far? I just find it so ridiculous—this idea that holding a little longer is getting more racy

On the other hand, you have a movie like The Accused, in which Jodi Foster gets raped for fifteen minutes and wins an Oscar for her brave performance—that's somehow acceptable

Well, I cut the image of the penis and the one cut-away during the rape scene—there's a cut-away to the guy's thigh as he's being raped and all you see is a little strip of flesh and the sense of movement and that's it. It was basically there to join two shots that had an awkward cut when you cut directly from the one to the next.

So you did the bare minimum, and what did they say?

'No.' They said this is not an R and we still need you to cut. This rape scene is too long, we still aren't comfortable with the boys having sex, and we want less groping before the penis. And I said, "No." They said, "Look, we really



Much of Poison's agenda hides within mainstream genres.

need the R, can you consider cutting a little bit more?' And I just didn't. It just made me feel...it infuriated me. The things they wanted me to cut I was seeing in films on television! I didn't think it was fair. It was coming from completely out of this homophobic...We're talking about an R-rated home video. When Fox/Lorber went back to the MPAA and told them I didn't want to cut anymore



Poison's problematic prison scenes necessitated cuts.

they said, "Okay, you got the R." They just backed down, and you realize that of course that's what they do. When they're playing with heavyweights like Michael Douglas (in *Basic Instinct*) it probably happens a lot more quickly.

Would you go to a Blockbuster and rent videos?

No. I don't even know where one is

Poison's gotten glowing reviews from the press, but on the other side it's been attacked by a lot of people. Did those two forces in any way affect the cutting process?

Not really. What was so funny was how much from the very start Fox/Lorber chose to emphasize that they had this sort of complete double bind in terms of their marketing strategy. The hottest selling point about the film was the controversy. Absolutely, unquestionably—the hottest thing. But the thing that would dissuade the most number of potential retail buyers was the homosexuality. So they wanted to talk as much about the controversy, and as little about the homosexuality as possible. They're not a bad company, but they just realized right away that those were their two currencies with this film. Or one was a *real* currency and one was a deterrent

Do you see what might be described as censorship in this country moving away from being a federal, institutionalized problem to a private sector issue?

It's a hard question to answer just because the government and the private sector seem to be working with the same sort of capitalist goal in mind. When at one time you might have opted for the government because it's

based on a constitution of freedom and democracy for all. For instance, art funding is becoming so incredibly dictated by an unwritten moral code that it seems freer in the world of the free market—that it's easier to get money from the private sector. But then again, similar kinds of moral imperatives are working there as well, like the MPAA and Hollywood itself. Both government sanctions and privately originated incentives are so full of contradictions that I think, in a sense, that it's the contradictions that are the most oppressive aspects of the situation. It's almost a romantic term, *censorship*. It's almost like we wish we had censorship in this country. We don't, you know, it's much more complex—and it's really a

sight of absolute contradiction where the things that have been attacked are the things that you see most often. You know, when you go to the bookstore and you look in the photography section, who you see more of than any other photographer is Robert Mapplethorpe. It's like there wasn't another photographer in the 70's and 80's other than Mapplethorpe. In that way you just have to question what this notion of censorship is really about. Some people say, "Well they help other films get made, they help other photographers get their work out, they set a precedent that can be followed by other artists." On the other hand, you wonder, are they these token disclosures that can be compared to Watergate? The one time that we revealed a problem to make up for all the times we didn't? It gives the nod to repressing all these other things that don't even come out because of this one thing that came out.

Having experienced censorship first hand, how do you feel about people who say we're not a free America, that we're censored? It's just not true. The best thing about America is how we all disagree. The thing I notice is that we swing back and forth to a susceptibility to certain voices and certain opinions and they might erupt in all kinds of reactions

and counter-reactions and so forth. Like Donald Wildmon being the one to point his finger at *Poison* and say it was pornography—though admitting full well that it's something he hadn't seen. We're not at the point right now historically where someone on the Left can stand up and say, "Well, I didn't see this film but I think it's very offensive to blacks and women," and then that would make front page news in all the papers. No, we haven't swung in that direction right now. We are very susceptible to the far Right and its claims. And that certainly is a fact. But what happens after that, and the way in which the scent is provoked, when a lot of opinions are provoked and people fight, and people scream, and people yell, and

people protest, and people debate, I think is actually the hopeful part. But I do think that it's almost idealistic and wishful and romantic to say, "Oh, we censor things here." I think some people wish it was that simple. It's like wishing for World War II—wishing for a clean, pure and simple oppression that you can just fight against. It's a little bit more complex and the complexity is what's interesting, you know?

What have you been doing recently?

In a nutshell, I've been writing a script and we're just trying to get the funding together. It's called *Safe*, and it's about a woman—a very comfortable, insulated person—whose whole world systematically falls apart when she becomes allergic to chemicals and common substances. It ultimately attacks the

whole question of how we respond to being sick these days and this new illnesses that fall outside of traditional medicine. We're raising a million dollars, or the budget for a 140 *Poisons*. American Playhouse and PBS are interested and that should help, but it's a rotten time for low-budget filmmaking. I thought I was out of that scene and it wouldn't be the same grind this time. I'm in a much better position than a lot of people, but then you go out and see *Far and Away* or *Alien³* and think, "God, what a waste and for what?" I just want to get funded, then deal with the controversy. **FIVE**



Poison's penis was pinched by the MPAA and Blockbuster.

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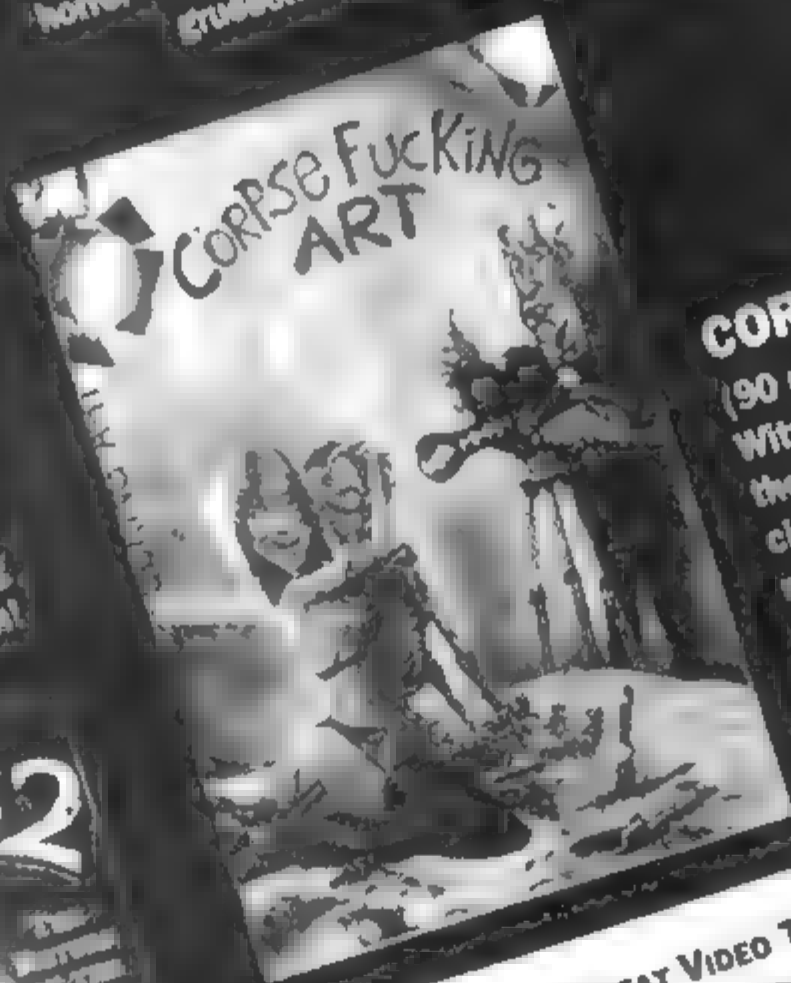


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The Real Frank Zappa Video Guide

Freak out to the psychedelic roots of underground film in this primer to Zappa's video atrocities.

by John Stryik

HERE'S A LITTLE SECRET: Frank Vincent Zappa, erstwhile rock star, symphonic composer, and semi-professional Senatorial witness, has also been making movies since the pre-freak-out Sixties! It all began back in 1962, when Frank was living in a small studio on Archibald Avenue in Cucamonga, California. He was trying to raise money to make a science-fiction epic called *Captain Beefheart and the Grunt People*. Once the San Bernardino vice squad caught wind of the project, however, they booked the aspiring producer on charges of "conspiracy to commit pornography."

Even though *Captain Beefheart* never got to flicker across the screens of middle America, Zappa kept his cameras rolling. Through countless concerts, albums and motels, he managed to amass a film vault about the size of Warner Bros. These gems are now beginning to see the light of day thanks to Zappa's own label Honker Home Video. Videos released thus far: *The True Story of 200 Motels*, *Uncle*

Meat, *Baby Snakes* and *The Amazing Mr. Bickford*. All can be viewed as extensions of the hyper-real visuals created during a typical Zappa-ized musical event.

The Honker releases prove that Zappa may not be the genius who foisted MTV upon an unsuspecting world (we would blame ex-Monkee Mike Nesmith), but he was there at the beginning. Take his ground breaking theatrical release *200 Motels*, (United Artists, 1971). Zappa has summed up this 100 minutes of bizarreness with the words, "touring can make you crazy." Zappa scored all the music, from an over-sized symphony orchestra with soloists and chorus (who play in the film's local Concentration Camp), to a down-and-dirty country bar band. He also wrote the story and screenplay, and is credited with directing the "characterizations" (with the "visuals" directed by Britisher Tony Palmer). It features one of the better Mothers of Invention incarnations: Mark Volman and

Howard Kaylan on vocals; Ian Underwood, Aynsley Dunbar, George Duke and F.Z. on everything else. Ringo Starr stars as "Larry the Dwarf" who's awfully tall for a dwarf and looks a lot like Zappa. Theodore Bikel is government agent Rance Monagripitz (who may or may not be Satan) and the sensitive (and very rare) Keith Moon as a sex-crazed Catholic Nun who odd's and ascends to heaven. The film also features naked groupies, a sad Gypsy Mutant Industrial Vietnam Cleaner, newts, rednecks, ballerinas, the thing from *2001: A Space Odyssey*, speed metal editing, a steaming briefcase concealing soul-stealing cheese burgers, vile foamy liquids, provocative squats, perverted game shows and Centerville, an entire town designed by Cal Schenkel. *200 Motels* was the first theatrical release to be shot entirely on video then transferred to 35mm film. And therein lies a story...

The True Story of 200 Motels (1987) is a 60-minute Honker Home



Video release made up of backstage footage shot by Dutch television during the production of the aforementioned video/film. The picture is peppered with interviews of all cast members and features a 1982 segment with Zappa conducted by *P.M. Magazine*, plus some nifty archival concert footage from 1968 to 1970. When you learn of the conditions Zappa shot *200 Motels* under, and some of the "creative types" he had to work with, that film becomes all the more impressive. One of the more interesting anecdotes to come out of the documentary concerns the film's sleazy producer, Jerry Goode. He decided to "balance the budget" by erasing all the original video masters and selling them as "used stock." This brilliant idea netted him \$4,000 while Zappa got screwed with something approximately the size of the Washington monument.

At a running time of almost two hours, *Uncle Meat* can be recommended only to the most hardcore Zappaists. This video is a cascade of constantly different points of view, connected and unconnected pieces of dialogue, images and music. There is no plot, but there is an explanation of sorts. Zappa tells us that he was stuck with seventeen hours of Mothers footage, shot over a period of three years, and was worried that he would have to tell some kind of story with it.

Well, he overcame his worries and gave us *Uncle Meat* instead. During shooting, Zappa decided to make his assistant editor, Phyllis Altenhaus, the star of the movie. He then creates a fascinating subplot by trying to get her to take her clothes off for a shower scene. (He does get her into the shower, fully clothed, while Uncle Meat washes her back with a hamburger.) British rock star drummer, Aynsley Dunbar, has a memorable scene where he is beaten by groupies with toilet brushes in the middle of the Hollywood Ranch Market. For die hard Zappa fans only.

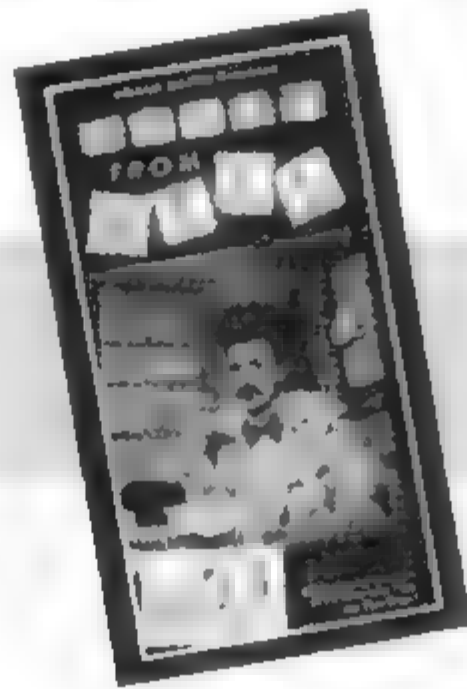
Baby Snakes is a three hour release that spans two VHS tapes. Most of it is Zappa's kick-ass 1979 Halloween concert in New York City. It features a great band, very tasty 35mm concert photography and a crowd of crazed fans who look, sound, and probably smell like *Spinal Tap* rejects. But the real eye-poppers are the incredible claymation segments realized by Bruce Bickford. His creations are the perfect visual equivalents of Zappa's chaotic sound. The sculptures are constantly mutating into something else, sometimes the melting faces of terrible gods, other times fingers that become



Zappa as his commercialized alter ego, Mr. Honker.

tree branches, branches that sprout leaves, leaves that become the relish on a cosmic hamburger, and so on. Zappa loved the flowing images so much that he produced *The Amazing Mr. Bickford*, a 55-minute video of claymation at its best and most disturbing. Bickford creates a complete universe that resembles a Godless and angst ridden *Davey and Goliath*. Bickford's clay characters booze, bruise, break and bleed in sequences that simulate a Salvador Dali nightmare. Zappa states "Bruce Bickford is a genius... It is a show that will be watched again and again, free framed, and gasped at for years to come."

And finally, there's *Does Humor Belong in Music?* Does it? Maybe not, but Zappa thinks it belongs on video. *DHBIM?* is a concert video of a 1984 performance at The Pier in New York that was originally intended for cable television. Although not an official Honker release, it is still hardcore Zappa. As usual, the video is riddled with pithy comments from Zappa, this time culled from various TV interviews. (The best is when Frank reveals, "To me, a cigarette is food.") One of the musical highlights is Zappa's amazing rendition of Greg Allman's "Whippin' Post." With a running time of 60 minutes, *DHBIM?* is a good way to ease into Zappa's concert universe. **HYG**



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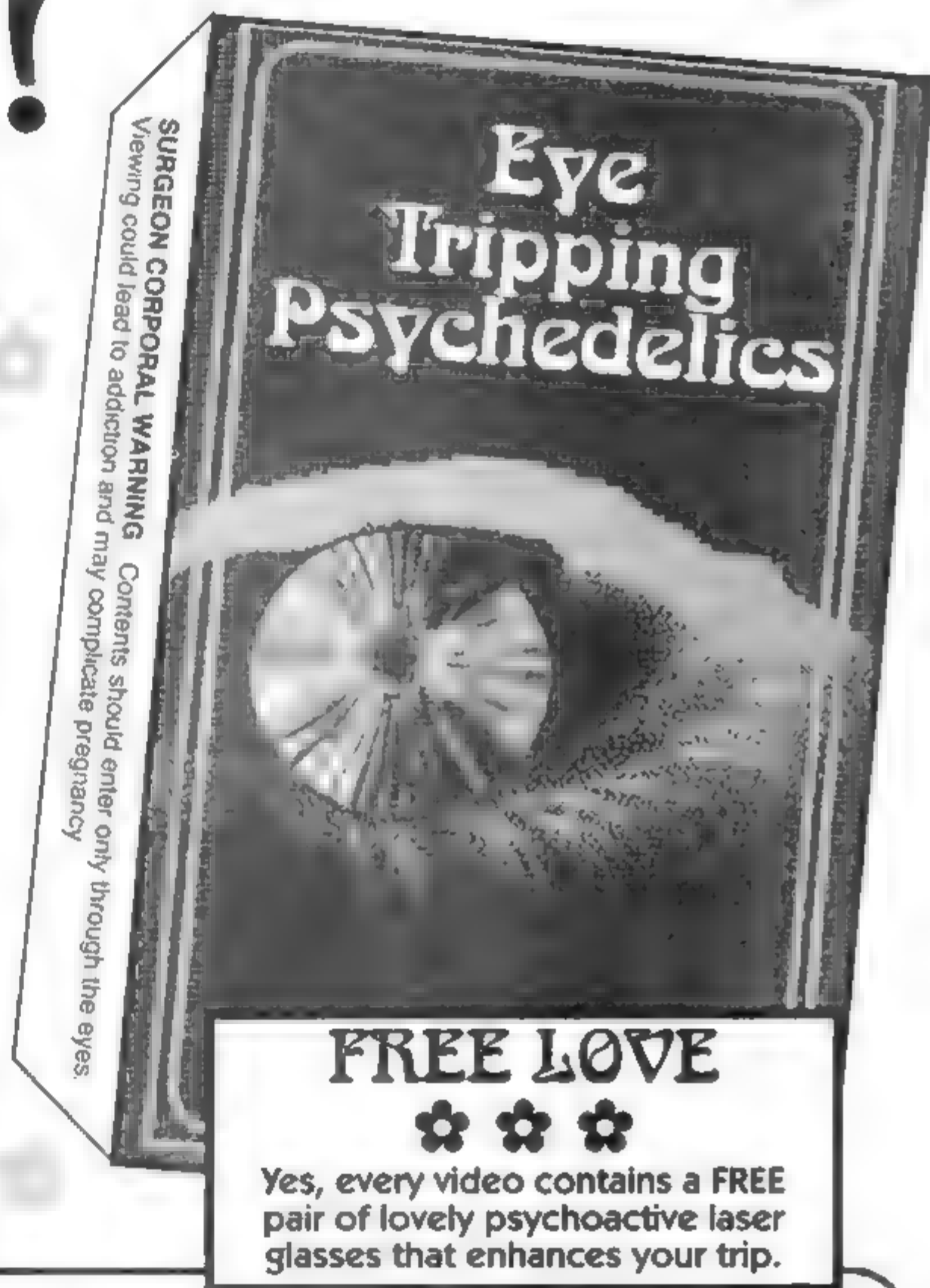
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IN THE CITY

by Dave Parker

One of the few fun things about living in Los Angeles (besides looking at genetically-mutated news anchorwoman Bree Walker and wondering exactly what she does to husband/sportscaster Jim Lampley with those claw-like appendages of hers), is being the first in the country to glimpse the latest piece of art from "guerrilla artist" Robbie Conal. For years, Conal has been plastering the city with posters tackling some of our nation's finest idiots. Jesse Helms, Ollie North, Ronald Reagan and George Bush are just a few of the pinheads in power who have felt the sharp, satirical sting of Conal's artwork. Many people say his posters are nothing but graffiti; an eyesore on the urban landscape. Along with most people, I'd say they're funnier than shit.

Post No Bills was originally done as a 9-minute documentary on Conal and his work. Using this short, director Clay Walker was able to secure the money to fund a version that runs close to an hour. Both are very entertaining, but there are some major differences between the two.

The short *Post No Bills* follows Conal through the creation and display of a poster called "Plan Ahead." It also intersperses great sound bites from Quayle, like "what a terrible waste it is not to have a mind" and Ronald Reagan's denial of an "arms for hostages deal."

Although it goes by rather quickly, you get a good sense of what Conal is all about if you are unfamiliar with his work. At nine minutes, it's just the perfect length.

The longer version of *Post No Bills* is just that: longer. But this time we get

to watch Conal take on ex-L.A.P.D. Chief/Nazi Daryl "I'm an asshole" Gates. Basically following the same outline as the short version, the longer running time enables the filmmakers to interview other folks besides Conal.

I can't tell you how much fun it is to actually see some of Conal's subjects talking about the artwork that's directed at them. It's incredible to see Gates actually claim that his civil



If only George had popped that nasty pustule, he might have had a shot at a second term.

rights have been violated after viewing the poster of his head on a shooting range target with the caption: "Casual Drug Users Ought To Be Taken Out And Shot." Gates uttered these words in front of a Senate subcommittee, making just about everyone in Los Angeles fear for their lives. Conal amended the poster after the Rodney King beating, crossing out the word "Shot" and writing in

Filmmakers Clay Walker and Marianne Dissard get to the pulpy heart of renegade poster artist Robbie Conal in their film *Post No Bills*.

"Beaten."

But, for people living in the rest of the country who might not care about our ex-douchebag chief, how about convicted felon, now head of a right wing political action group, Ollie "I love my country and that's why I subverted the Constitution" North. Watch with glee when—during a book signing for some dribble he had ghost-written—North gets handed a book containing a picture by Conal comparing him to Red-baiter Joseph McCarthy. Needless to say, he's not too fuckin' happy.

Unfortunately, these guest-appearances are the best part of this longer version and I wish there had been even more. Nothing more is learned about Conal that wasn't revealed in the short. All we get is more of Conal spouting the same platitudes about freedom of speech that we've heard a thousand times. Although everything he says is true, it's really no different hearing it from him as it is hearing it from 2 Live Crew.

Shot in 16mm black and white, these videos are both extremely watchable and informative. Not to mention that it's nice to see someone getting together the money to do a documentary instead of some lame horror film.

If his artwork hasn't hit your town, (Conal has branched out, plastering New York, Washington D.C. and San Francisco), these documentaries are definitely the next best thing to actually seeing the posters on a nearby construction site. **D**

The feature length Post No Bills will air on PBS sometime this year

Trigger Happy



Camera commands
Jim Sikora and
Dawn Plotnick
brandish their
small but deadly
weapons of choice in
Small
Gauge
Shotgun.

Laura Rosow gets gritty in **Pillow Talk**, her 1991 collaboration with Plotnick.

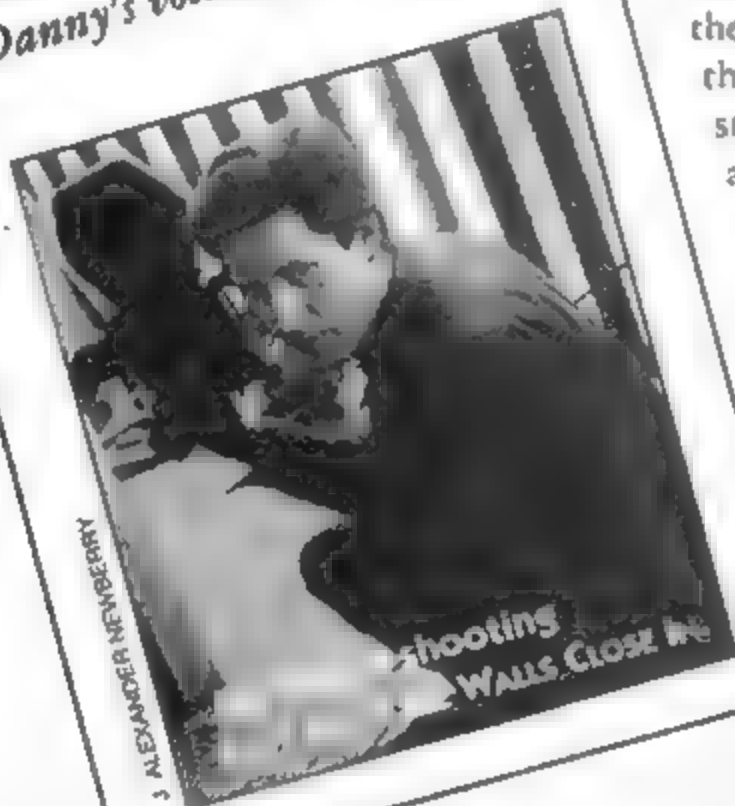
By Chris O'Flaherty

APPROPRIATELY TITLED, *Small Gauge Shotgun* contains short films like you've never seen, by the "Kings of Super 8," Danny Plotnick and Jim Sikora. Their short works on this entertaining compilation express a variety of thematic colors, from a bright, expletive red (Plotnick's *Steel Belted Romeos*), to a bleak, disturbing gray (Sikora's apocalyptic *Terminal Hotel*). At first glance you notice the diversity in style of these two mini moguls—with Plotnick's in-your-face "fuck you asshole" approach contrasted with Sikora's visceral black and white images of thought-provoking subtlety. But after separately interviewing this eclectic twosome and probing their cinematic minds, the similarities surfaced more often than the differences.

How do your respective films complement each other's?

DANNY PLOTNICK: Well, I think they actually complement each other a lot. One thing that I think is really strange, as we send this tape around and get feedback, is the great distance all the people who review the tape go to in mentioning how different the films are, which is actually pretty shocking to us.

"Danny is more confrontational. I tend to go for subtlety. I don't know if subtlety is in Danny's vocabulary..." —SIKORA

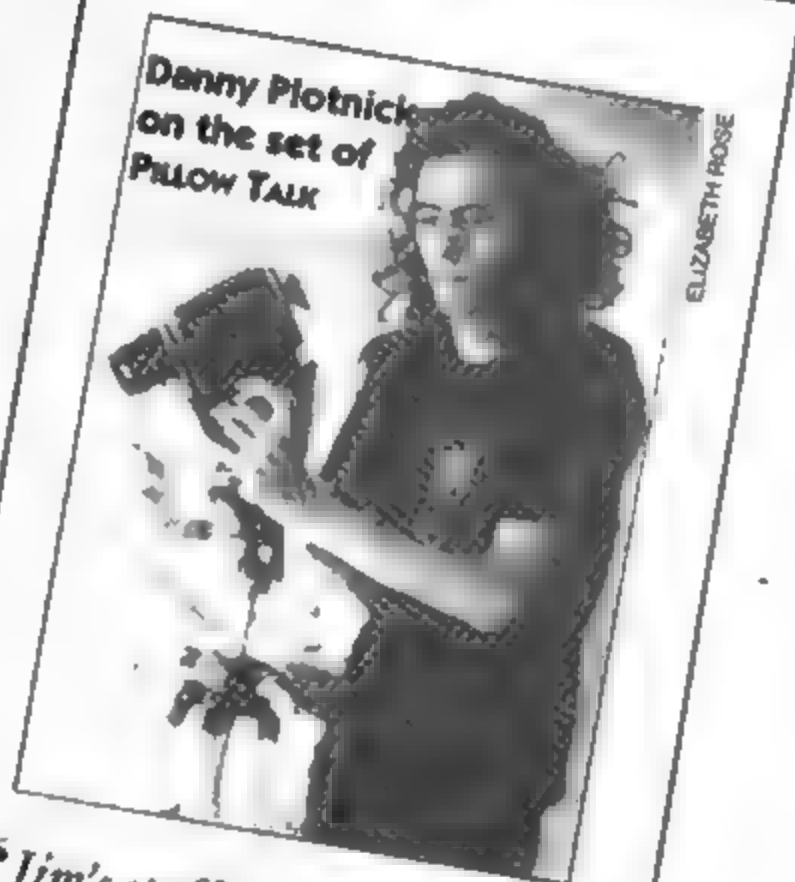


We both think they are very complementary. In a certain respect, the conflict in each film is different sides of the same coin. But the treatment is different. Jim's stuff is a lot moodier, with more humor under the surface, and mine is more absurd, in-your-face and over-the-top. But I think thematically they deal with a lot of the same topics, these marginal characters and their hopeless situations without resolution. I suppose I can understand why people might think that they are different, but to make such a big deal about it? I think there is a lot of humor in Jim's stuff, but people don't always seem to pick up on it.

JIM SIKORA: Danny's films are lighter and mine tend to be darker. Those things complement each other. He's from Detroit and I'm from Chicago. Maybe that might make things a little clearer. If you have ever watched the Bulls play the Pistons you can get an idea of what I'm talking about. We're similar not necessarily in form, but there is a subtext. Danny is more confrontational. I tend to go for subtlety. I don't know if subtlety is in Danny's vocabulary.

How did you guys meet?

DP: In 1987, I released a compilation tape called *Fat City Death Sled* and Jim was actually the first person who bought a copy. He was really into it, so he sent me his stuff. I was not thrilled by that prospect, just because I get a ton of free stuff in the mail. It was like, "Oh, God, this guy's gonna send me his stuff, I'm really gonna hate it and he likes my stuff. I'm gonna offend the one person in the country who likes my stuff." So he sent me his own tape. Ray Wilcox [SGS actor] was over and we popped it in and we were just like splittin' our sides watching *Bring Me the Head of Geraldo Rivera* and *Stagefright*.



"Jim's stuff is a lot moodier, with more humor under the surface, and my stuff is more absurd, in-your-face and over-the-top."

—PLOTNICK

Chameleon—I thought Jim's stuff was really great.

JS: I'm a big fan of Danny's *Motorbooty* magazine and I saw that he had a video compilation of Super 8 films called *Fat City Death Sled*. I managed to get a hold of him and told him I was doing Super 8 shows around town and would he send me a reel of his stuff. And when I saw what he did, I just split a gut. *Fat City* was kind of a hit here in Chicago. So the last few years we've just kind of created a network, supplying each other with films, doing our own shows and trying to spread them out for whoever wants to see them.

Small Gauge Shotgun refers to the Super 8 format, which is not always favorably looked upon. Do you think Super 8 has gotten a bad rap?

DP: It's definitely considered the bastard film gauge. The kind of thing that you learn on and—once you realize what a piece of shit it is—you move on. I think that's really ludicrous and comes from people who haven't actually worked in Super 8 in ten years and don't know what kind of equip-



The Jersey-types from *DEATH SLED II* (1990): Top row L-R: Elizabeth Rose, Alison Levy. Bottom row, L-R: Ray Wilcox, Plotnick and Chris Enright.

brown, the sounds really shitty and the teacher goes, "Well, that's the medium." And the reality is you don't know how to make films. It would look just as bad in 16mm, but people can't accept that they possibly fucked up.

JS: Recently, Super 8 has gotten a lot more respect. It's not just a grainy excuse for the real thing. It's still film and if you're going to video with it, it looks beautiful. I think if you can make a great Super 8 film, you can work in any other film medium. The way I look at it, if you can shoot in Super 8, you can shoot in IMAX. Really, if you know how to compose a

shot, move things within the frame and keep things goin' somehow at the level of Super 8, I think you can do it at any other level. But if you start out working in 35mm, it would be very hard for those people to work with

ment is out there or don't know what the medium can do anymore. The funny thing about Super 8 is that everyone learns on it. Monkeys can work with it, it's that simple. The reality is that there are a lot of limitations to it, but once you know what they are you can do incredible things with it. If you look at our tape I don't think you'd have any clue that it was Super 8 if we didn't make such a big deal about it.

Super 8 is a more complex medium than 16mm, where you have so many gadgets and all these options in both production and post-production. One of the limitations of Super 8 is that it's an unforgiving medium and once you fuck up you kinda have to live with it. You can't just save it in the lab. You really have to know your stuff. So in a sense it's actually a really hard medium to learn on. If you fuck up, everything looks

"The way I look at it, if you can work in Super 8, you can shoot in IMAX."

—SIKORA

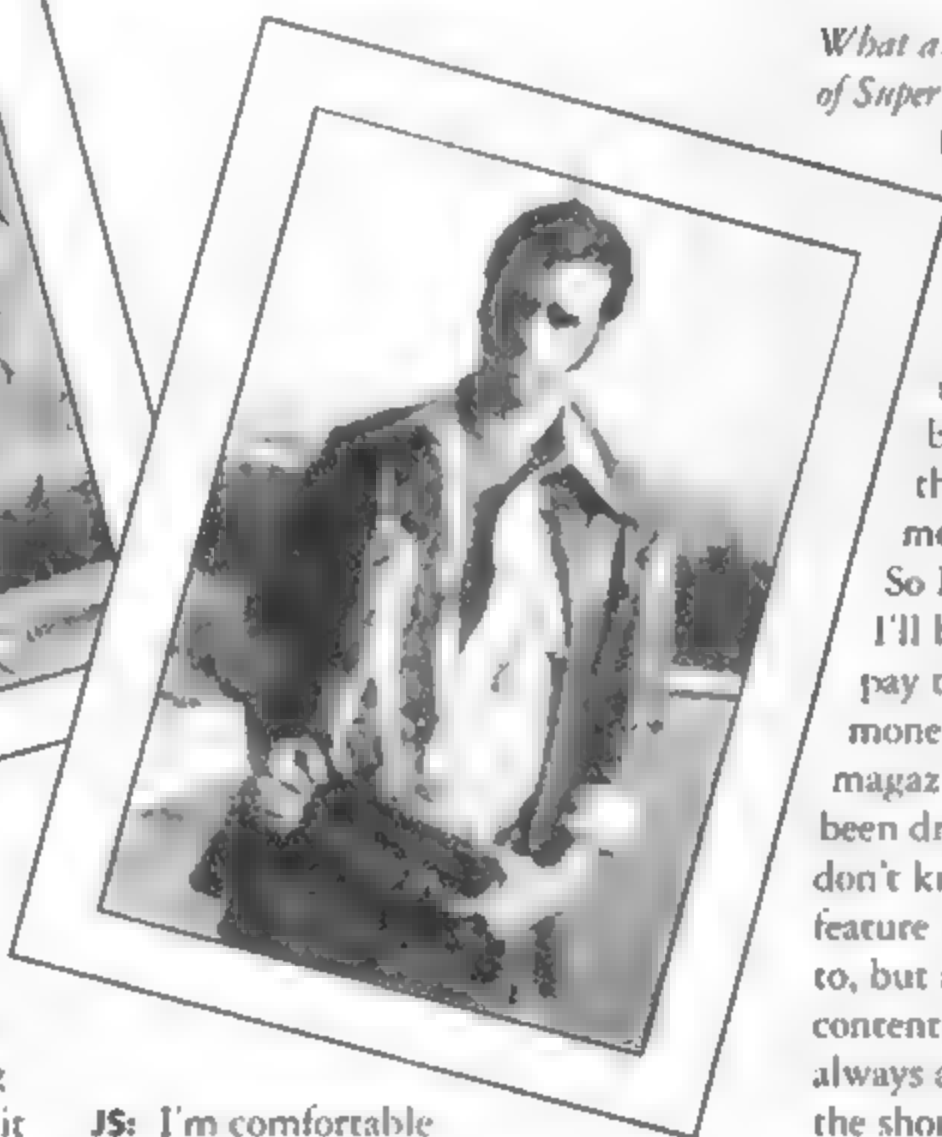
DUMBASS FROM DUNDAS (1988): Two geeks in the middle of nowhere (L-R: Ray Wilcox, Josh Pollack).





The DEATH SLED II bad boys in full bloom: (left) Ray Wilcox; (bottom:) Chris Enright.

PHOTO BY DANA MENDELSON



Super 8. It's a funny thing—Super 8 is very immediate, closer to really personal expression, closer to writing maybe. I hope it survives, because if it doesn't, I'm gonna be in trouble, man.

Are you comfortable working in the Super 8 medium?

DP: Yeah. Through the years I would make mistakes in each film and then ask myself, "Okay, how do I correct this mistake?" Eventually, I just said, "Well, my earlier films, which I like and think are funny, are technically flawed because I was learning. I can accept that because the good portions of those films outweigh the flaws." When I got to *Dumbass From Dundas* [1988] I just said, "I can't cut myself any slack. It's time to do a film where I just get all those technical things out of the way and people are gonna like this film based on the film. So, it got to the point after working in Super 8 for at least three or four years that I just got to know the medium really well and understood the limitations of it. Since then, I've cranked out pretty proficient films with very few technicalities. It's just a lot cheaper, too, than working in 16mm. But I'm content to make Super 8 films as long as I'm making films that I think won't be impaired by using Super 8.

JS: I'm comfortable. Let me take that back—it's what I can afford. And actually, at this point, I can barely afford to do that now. It's becoming harder, but I'm willing to continue because of my love for the medium and the sense that I generally don't have to answer to anybody. I can do what I want with it. Some people actually think it's a downgrade to work in Super 8, but I think you have to be more disciplined because first you don't have much money and you also have to know what you want. If you fuck up, you FUCK UP! Unless, of course, you have a lot of money to do a lot of reshoots once you get the stuff back from the lab—which I don't. That's part of the fun for me, man. I like the sense that, okay this is a three minute take and we only have enough film to do this once. And when it hap-

pens it's beautiful. I like that unpredictability. You don't always know how it's gonna turn out.

What are your future goals as the "Kings of Super 8?"

DP: Well, I guess I just assumed over the last ten years that any kind of artistic pursuits would unfortunately not pay the rent. Maybe that's a bad mind set, but I just don't believe there's an audience out there ready to pay me enough money to live off making films. So I've just always accepted that I'll have some straight job that'll pay the rent and allow me enough money to make my films and do my magazine *Motorbooty*. But lately it's been drivin' me crazy time wise. I don't know that my goal is to make feature films. I definitely would like to, but at this point I am completely content with making short films. I've always assumed that if you take care of the short term the long term will take care of itself.

JS: I'm trying to do a feature now. Doing a feature is like taking all the short films you've done and stringing them together and having them all relate to each other. It's a different ball game. It's a slow process because I'm doing more writing—and I hate writing everything out. I generally work with elaborate treatments or stories

(FVG)



Sikora's Bukowski adaptation, *LOVE AFTER THE WALLS* Close In (1991). L-R: Tony Fitzpatrick, Katherine Chronis, Joe Larocca.

A CASE OF

Filmmaker Lee Karaim gets into sexual deviance, psycho mumbo jumbo, and agoraphobia in his film **CLOSET CASE**.

Ruth's emotional dam breaks during psychotherapy.

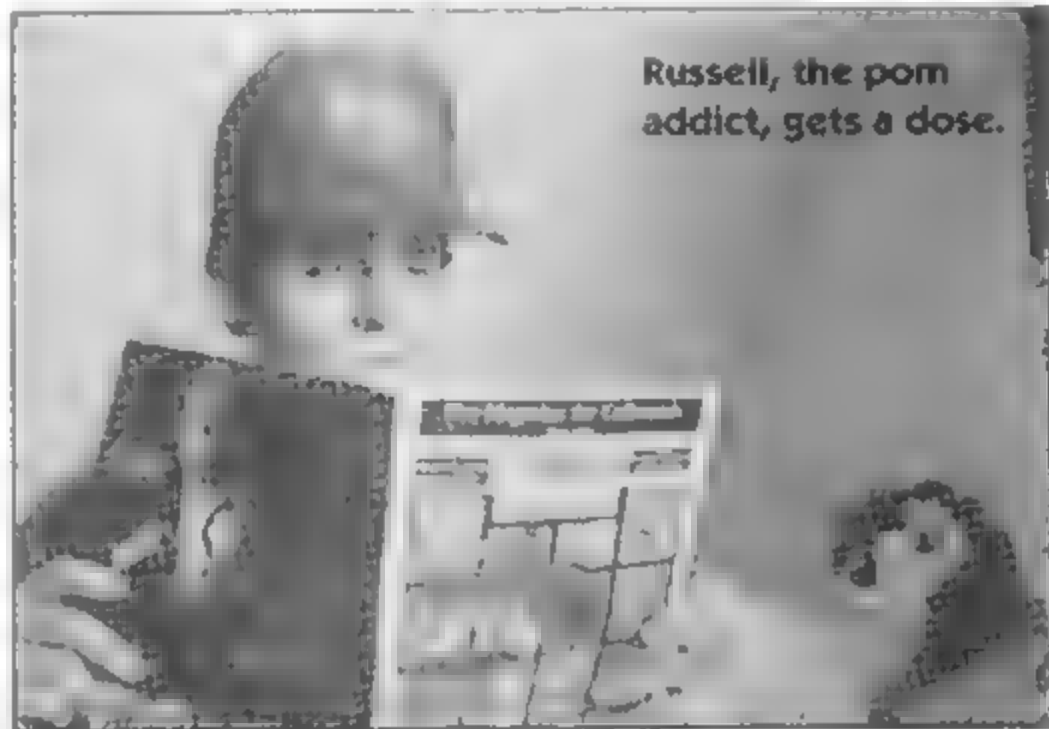
MEET THE DOWNEY FAMILY: Wholesome mom, Ann, annoyingly cute son, Kip, and his happy-go-lucky younger sister, Ruth. They're the dysfunctional *Leave It to Beaver* family of the 90s, all the way down to the classic black and white. Throw in a little autoerotic sex, psychiatrist lingo and cheap booze to spice things up a bit and then bring to a slow simmer and you get Lee Karaim's first feature, *Closet Case*.

Unlike many low budget attempts, Karaim avoided falling into the genre realm of blood and guts filmmaking. "I just wanted to make a film I would like to see," he says. "I'm really picky about what I write and I can't see myself writing a horror film."

A horror film of the psyche is more like it, as Ruth and Ann fall into a desperate tailspin of depression and alcoholism after Kip's bizarre death in a auto accident. Abnormal behavior soon follows: Ruth (Lara Karaim) bottles her ambivalent feelings, declining into an agoraphobic state (the fear of leaving your own house) whereas mom, Ann, drowns her feelings in a bottle. Sensing a need for outside help, Ann (Janice Blume) hires an in-home psychiatrist (How else ya gonna treat

an agoraphobic?), Dr. Rubenstein (Dennis Bean). To pay for this financial hardship, she rents out her diseased son's room to Russell Schmidt (Toby Bitter), a testosterone bloated porno addict. Conflicting characters and and plot complications ensue.

Russell, the porno addict, gets a dose.



CLOSETPHOBIA

Russell soon finds that
cigarettes and blow-up dolls
don't mix.



This amalgamated mess develops into a biting commentary on the American Family, alcohol abuse and the availability of pornography—although at 90 minutes, the film unfolds slowly into its demented finale. Ruth's phobias are interesting, but pale in comparison to the insatiable taste of Russell's porno palate.

Karaim steps around these subjects delicately with his 16mm savvy, focusing on the complexity of his characters.



Paying for the "real" thing.

The respective emotional instability of Russell and Ruth are the film's highlights. Her lamenting soul cries out for help downstairs during her treatments, while he masturbates upstairs to the company of porno videos and magazines. The film teeter-totters back and forth as Ruth struggles with her phobias on a slow path to recovery, and Russell plunges into a kinky world of big tits, inflatable dolls and prostitution—until the two collide in a humorously melancholic conclusion.

Typical of independent films, *Closet Case* proved to be topsy-turvy terrain for the filmmaker. Being on his own gave Karaim full creative control in every aspect of the project, but it also left him holding the bag...the money bag, that is. Unable to come

up with the necessary wad, he utilized the precious element of time, bankrolling the film over a three year period. Laboring in the world of minimum wage—including as a dishwasher at a Mexican restaurant (which ended up becoming a key location), Karaim paid the way up until the point where plastic persuasion *a la* Visa and Mastercard reared its ugly head. The Hollywood story of financing a film on credit cards is no urban legend here, but Karaim held off going into debt as long as possible. "I don't know where the hell I expected the money to come from!" he laughs. "But I was hoping it would come from somewhere." The money, however, didn't magically appear, while the

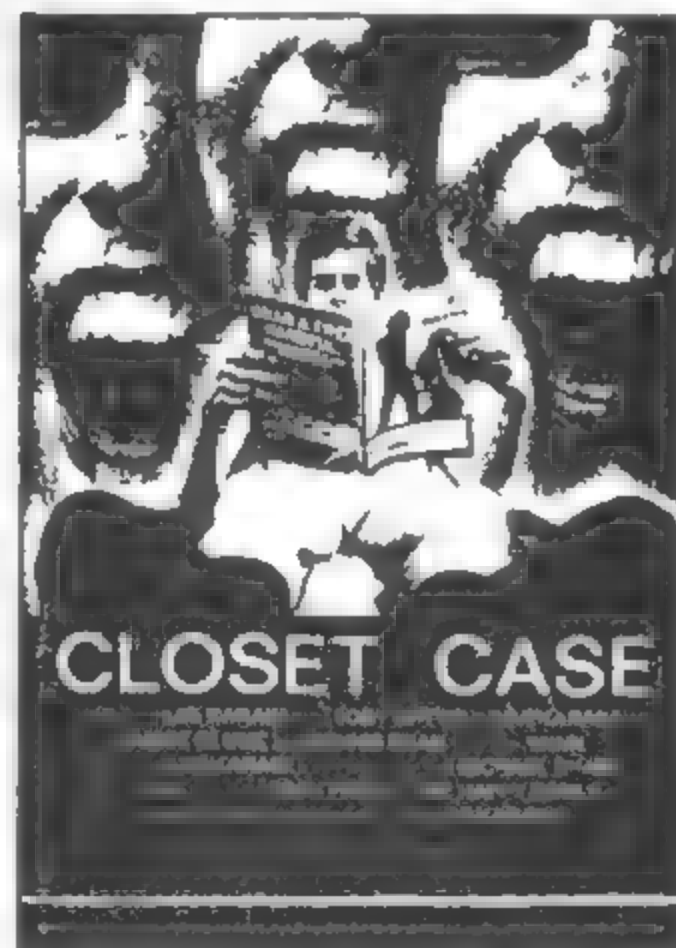
by Chris O'Flaherty

convenience of instant credit beckoned him as the days of non-productivity grew into months and months.

"After just sitting around and doing nothing for a year," he recalls, "I said 'Fuck it!' So the final print (as well as one third of the entire budget) was all on credit cards."

Karaim's artistic sense is openly honest when talking about his work. He jokingly refers to *Closet Case* as his "labor of hate." And when asked about the black and white artistic quality of the film and how it relates to the overall tone, he simply says, "Well, I couldn't afford color." No bullshitting here.

Currently, Karaim is shopping *Closet Case* around to various film festivals and distributors while finishing up a script for his next project. Three years of working on *Closet Case* has been a fundamental learning experience in writing, directing, editing and producing, but he warns others of traveling the credit card route—a road which he definitely will not travel again. (The interest has gotta be murder!) **(TVG)**



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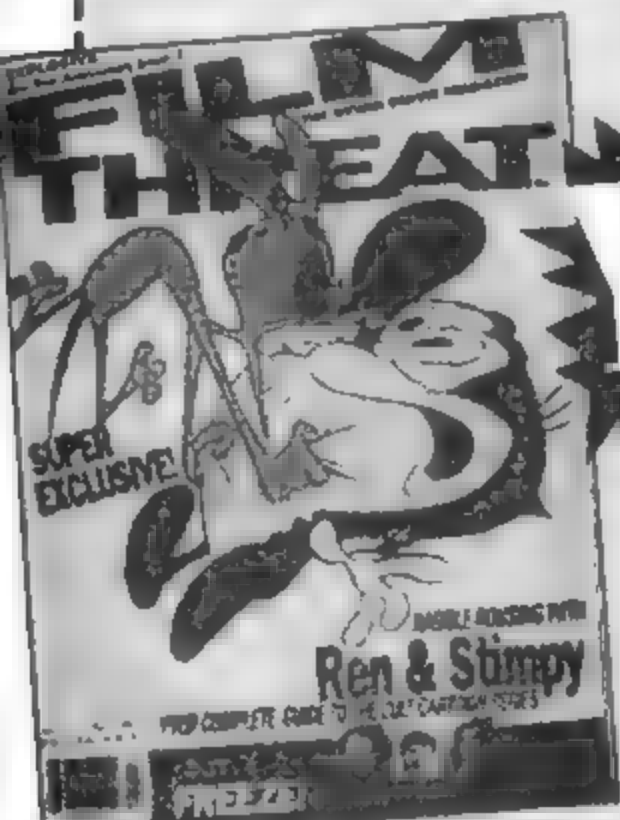
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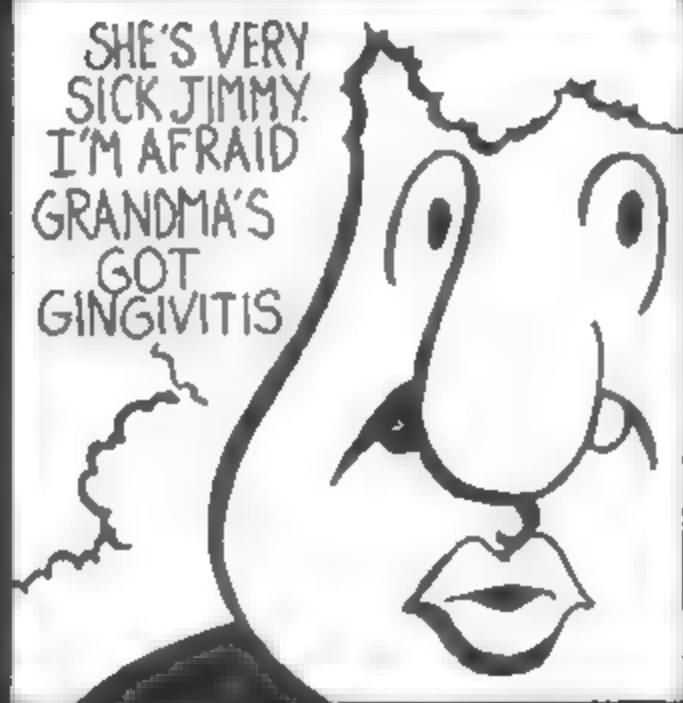
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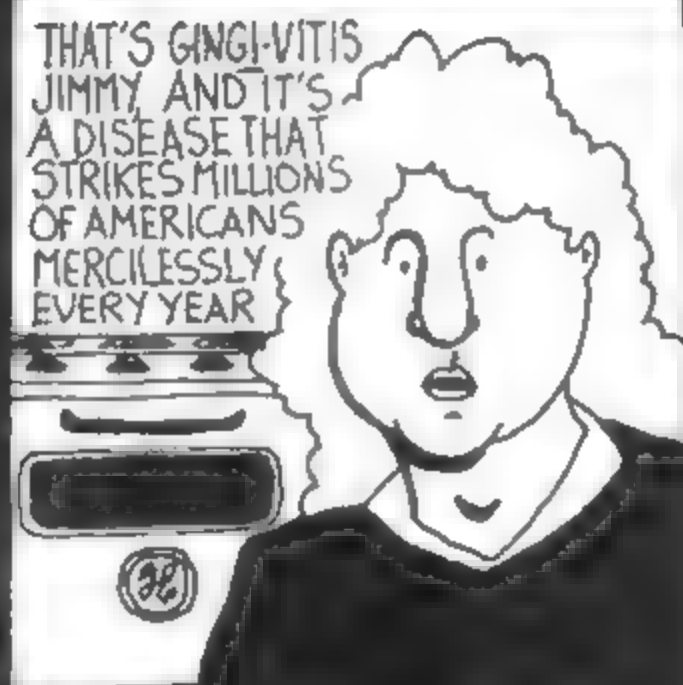
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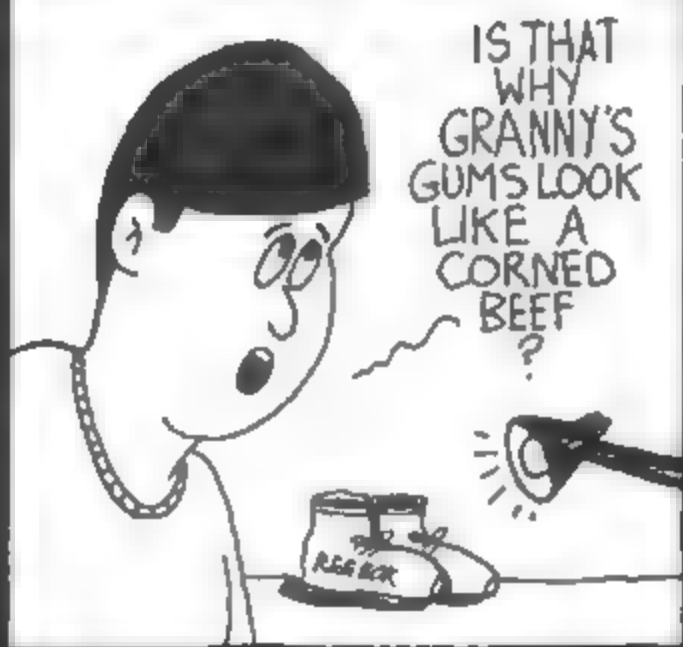
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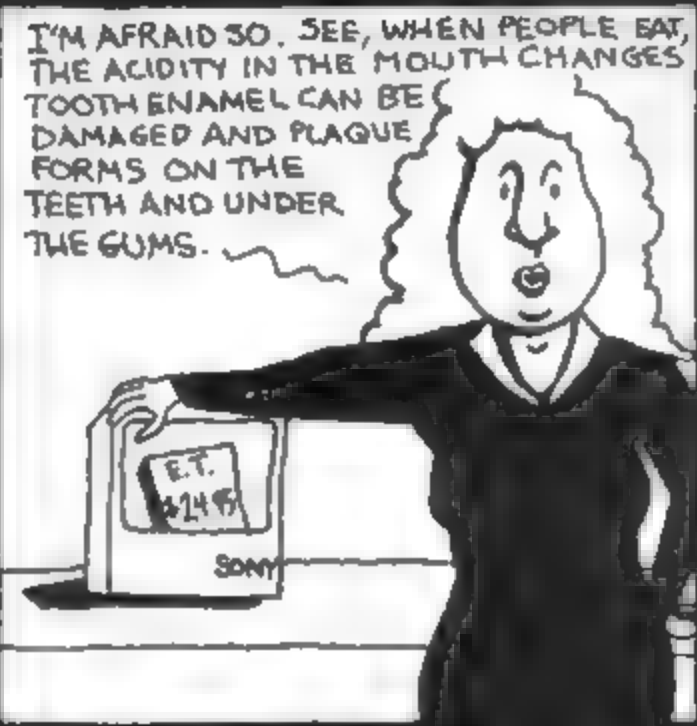
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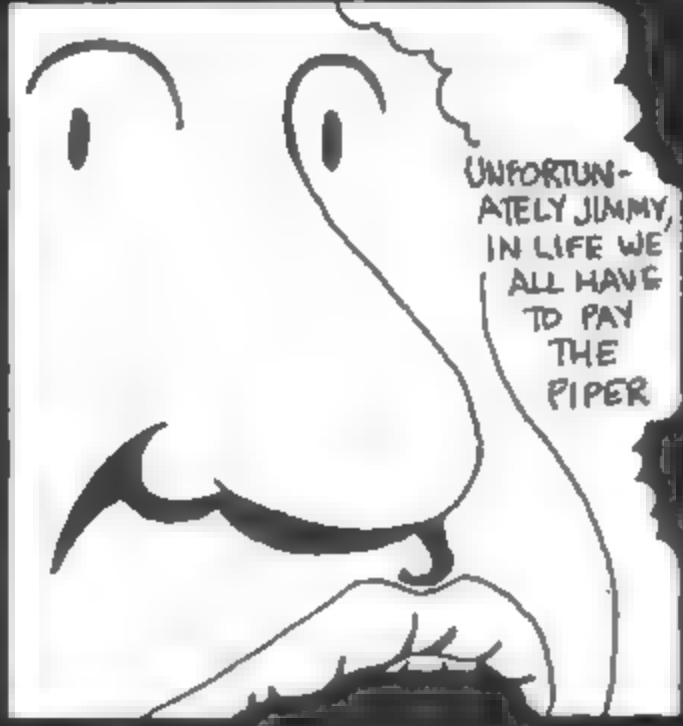
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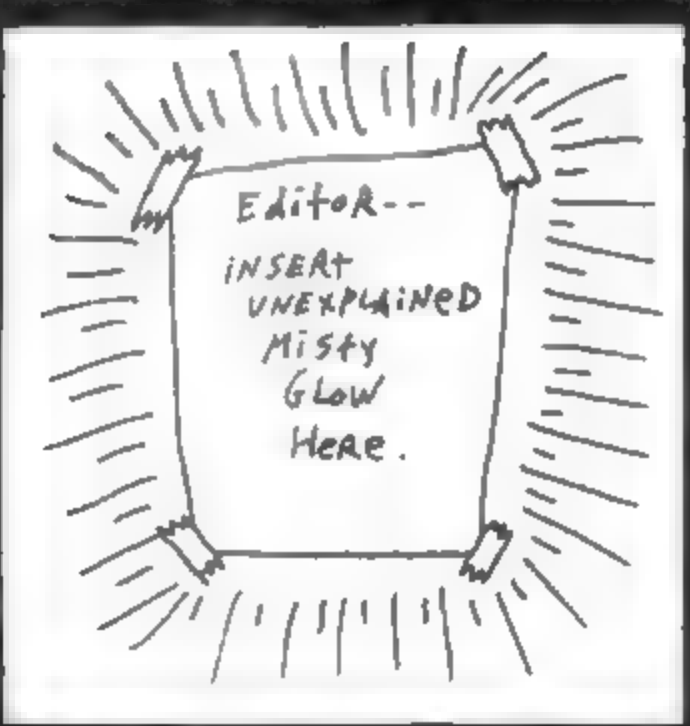
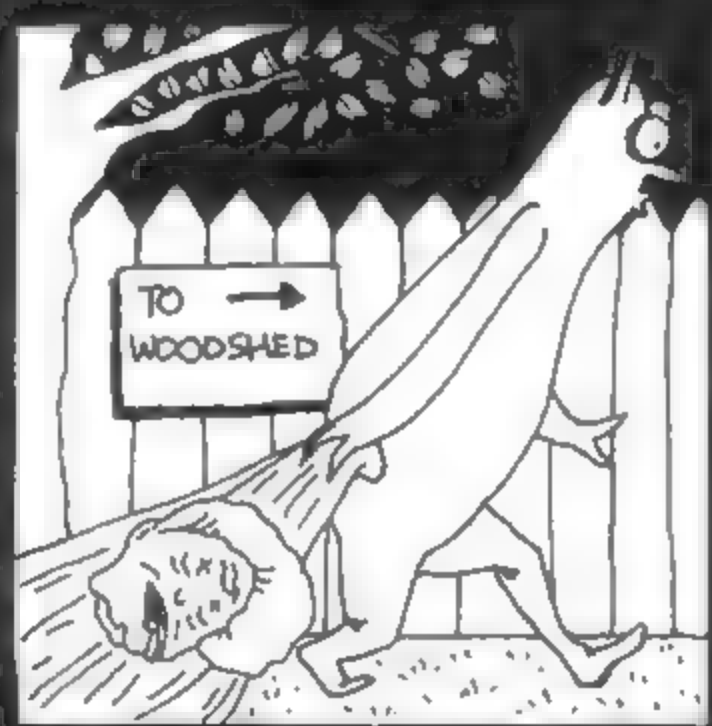


REGULAR BRUSHING
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 CAN KEEP IT
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 IN MOST CASES,
 BUT GRANDMA
 WAS RECKLESS.
 THE METAMUCIL
 AND CHOCOLATE
 EX-LAX FINALLY
 CAUGHT UP WITH
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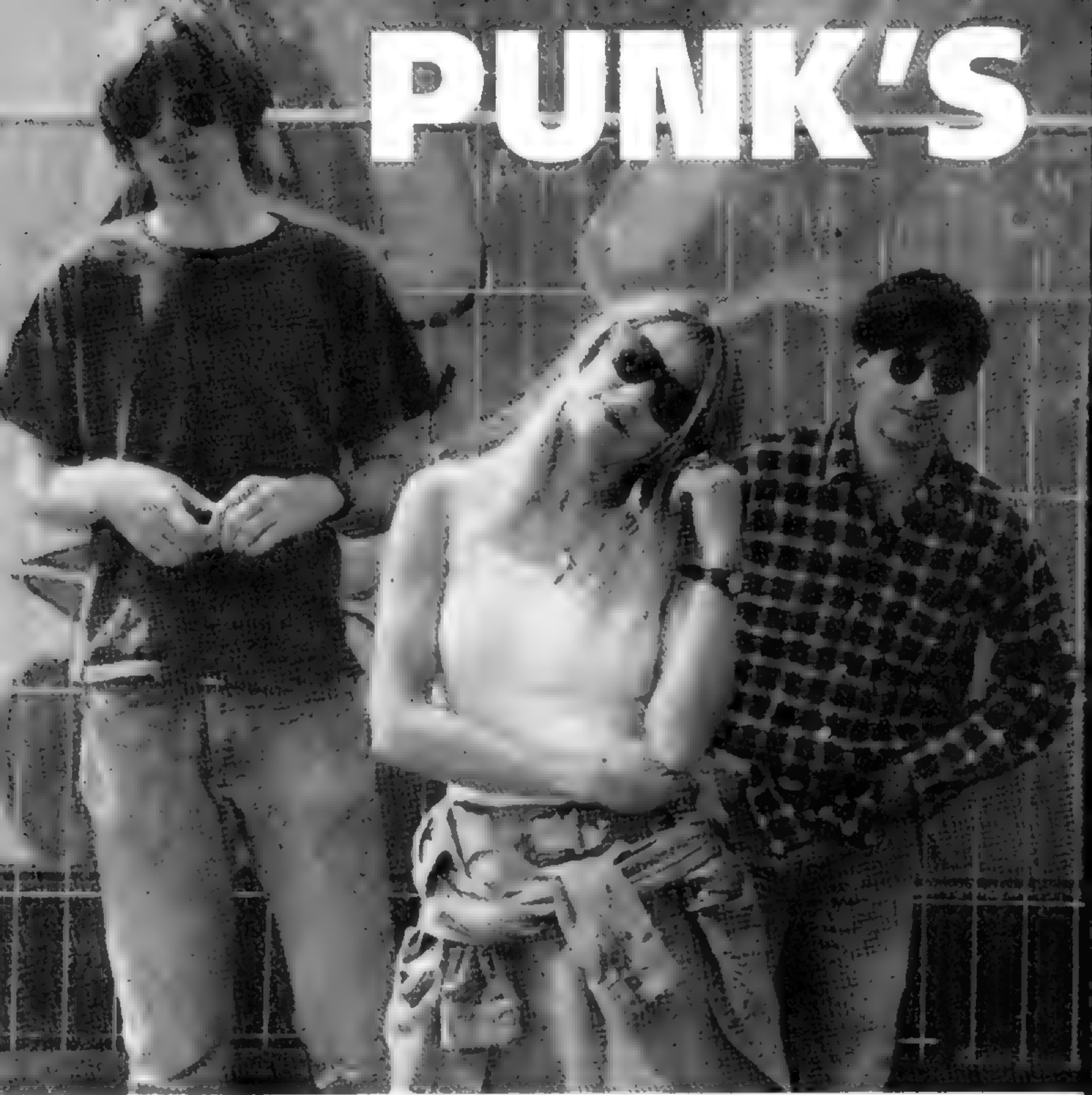
UNFORTUN-
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 IN LIFE WE
 ALL HAVE
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PUNK'S



Never mind the Sex Pistols, here's Sonic Youth and Nirvana on the road in David Markey's Super 8 riot 1991: The Year Punk Broke.

BIG



DEBATE

BY GABRIEL ALVAREZ

"WHEN YOUTH
CULTURE BECOMES
MONOPOLIZED BY
BIG BUSINESS,
WHAT ARE THE
YOUTH TO DO?"

• THURSTON MOORE •
OF SONIC YOUTH

NINETEEN-NINETY-TWO may have been the year you finally got sick of mainstream press giving alternative music a handjob, but back in 1991 this "overnight" phenomenon was still the "next big thing." Leave it to Sonic Youth, the mother lode of today's independent music scene—a band that has mutilated every fringe genre from punk to kitschy pop into progressive and influential melodic output for more than a decade—to put everything into perspective. As made by filmmaker David Markey (director of the 1984, no-frills, rock biz spoof *Desperate Teenage Lovedolls* and its technically superior, if not more out-of-whack, sequel *Lovedolls Superstar*), *1991: The Year Punk Broke* is not only a feature-length rockumentary of Sonic Youth's European tour with Seattle-based megascars Nirvana, but a soothingly noisy time-capsule that proves corporate America can only buy into cutting-edge hipness—not be a part of it.

Shot entirely by Markey in the subdued grandeur that is Super 8, *1991* relishes in jokey montages that die hard

fans will eat up and unleashes an 18-song arsenal of smoking sets from not only the aforementioned bands, but from such acts as Dinosaur Jr., Babes in Toyland, Gumball and, yes, The Ramones.

"I got a call a week before the tour started which was in August of '91," explains Markey, sitting in his minimal, yet accommodating Los Angeles apartment. As he tells it, Thurston Moore, one of the founding members of Sonic Youth, asked the 29-year-old ex-musician (member of Painted Willie, Sin 34 and Anarchy Six) if he wanted to document the two-week tour just for fun. "It was, 'Just come along, shoot some stuff and see what happens,'" he recalls. "I didn't even have a passport at the time and I had to scramble to get my shit together. I bought like 2,000 rolls of Super 8 film and stuffed everything into a large suitcase."

The resulting footage from the two-week stint prompted the David Geffen Company (DGC, the major label that signed Sonic Youth in 1990) to blow up *1991* to 16mm and give it a midnight screening theatrical release across the country (the original plans for a 35mm upgrade were scrapped according to Markey). "It's pretty great because the whole thing was done in Super 8, with really no budget and no aspirations for anything at all," says the director. "It was just like a very large home movie."

What strikes you first about *1991* is just that, the surreal feeling of actually being there, as if you were walking around equipped with an all-access



Lee Ranaldo (left) of Sonic Youth warns Markey to keep an eye out for unexpected 1991 co-stars from MTV.

backstage pass. "For me, this film was a departure because I really used a lot of *cinema verité*. Just letting what's happening take over," says Markey.

Throughout 1991, the viewer is privy to wild behavior as bands indulge in the stereotypical wanton atmosphere associated with rock music. Off-stage, members abuse the catering, strike up deep conversations with perplexed locals and basically fuck around. (In one scene, Sonic Youth bassist Kim Gordon mockingly chastises aloud, "I was promised there would be no fat Industry people sitting in the front.") The let-it-roll technique aside, Markey agrees that the loaded camera can egg on such tomfoolery. "Sure, you bring a camera into a room with a bunch of slightly drunk guys and they're gonna be clowny for you." But as he notes, "Another great thing about the Super 8 camera is that it's portable, small and less obtrusive than a larger camera. People weren't as intimidated because I didn't have a large film crew with me. I was able to really capture the close feel." Yet, not all you see is spontaneous. "There were certain scenes that I set



up," reveals Markey. "But while editing I thought all the stuff that I set up looked real and all the stuff that was real looked fake."

Clearly, however, the performances onstage are genuinely explosive, guaranteed to satisfy those starved for non-lip-synching musical renditions. Nirvana's plow through "School," in which frontman Kurt Cobain rams his head repeatedly into the nearest amp, or the 100% female Babes in Toyland's expulsion of their vicious "Dustcake Boy," (a song that threatens to rupture the collective ears of The Go-Gos, The Bangles and maybe even L7) are highlighted by haphazard angles. This is no small task considering it was "a one-man show," according to Markey, who shot footage daily. Asked how he decid-

ed what to zero in on during the heat and flash of a live show, the solo shooter answers: "It's like being in there in the moment, zen-like. Just letting what's happening dictate the direction."

Sporadically interspliced with the often audience-level view of the stage are scenes of Sonic Youth visiting the sights of that particular city stop, whether it be amusement parks or the nearest used record store. The project's scope would on the surface seem exhausting. Not so, says its helmer. "Making this film wasn't work at all. It was just a lot of fun."

Perhaps that's why 1991 embodies a familiarity with all the groups involved. "I think it's a film for fans," says Markey. "It's very much on the inside. It takes the slice-of-life approach and let's the reality of a two-week tour be itself without any sort of narrative." In keeping in line with this approach, the movie doesn't announce what particular group is on camera. In fact, the only times you see the names of bands—besides the credits—are on posters, fliers, T-shirts and, in one amusing

shot, placards sitting atop rather elegant-looking dinner tables. "I was considering putting the band's name and their song title on the screen at the intro to each song. But I wanted to make people work a little," laughs the filmmaker. "Some critics have really harkened on that. And I understand it. It was a challenging thing to do." Still, Markey points to past cinematic efforts in justifying his move. "If you look at *Monterrey Pop* I don't think they had the bands' names or song titles on it," he says. Another complaint has been that of re-hashing the concert film genre, a criticism he expected. "A lot of the critics are immediately taken to, 'Oh, it's the '60s film reconstructed.' It may look like that to them just because there's festivals and lots of people."

Just the same, did Markey screen any rock movies before shooting? "Just films in my memory from my childhood," he says. "*The Kids Are Alright*, *The Song Remains the Same*. *Pink Floyd at Pompeii* is one of my favorites. Then, of course, *The Punk Rock Movie*, *D.O.A.*, *The Decline of the Western Civilization*. These were all films I was definitely influenced by."

Markey first met Sonic Youth years ago at a Black Flag show. He eventually

had Moore contribute a song to *Lovedolls Superstar*. And whenever they met up, the friends would make "really ridiculous Super 8 shorts," the first of which was a parody. "We saw this James Woods film, *The Boost*, which was really terrible," Markey remembers. "We religiously got into it and made our own version of it. James Woods is major inspiration," Markey laughs. He later directed the clips for "Mildred Pierce" (starring friend and former Redd Kross groupie Sofia Coppola) and "Cinderella's Big Score" on Sonic's *Goo* home music video.

Another teaming resulted in *Rap Damage*, where the duo tried to peg the hip hop culture. "Actually, some of *Rap Damage's* attitude found its way into 1991," says Markey. Indeed, during some pre-concert shenanigans, Ice T's gangsta lyrics are heard mimicked.

Moore inadvertently becomes the narrator of 1991 each time he engages in one of his many indecipherable outbursts. One can't even begin to translate the meaning of such rants as "a dance, a fucky-wucky dance" or "everybody, you're not just a duck, you're a human!" Markey ponders, "It's stream of unconsciousness, psycho-babble. We were trying to do poetry. I'm

sure someone will sit down someday with the videotape and transcribe all of it and put it on a T-shirt."

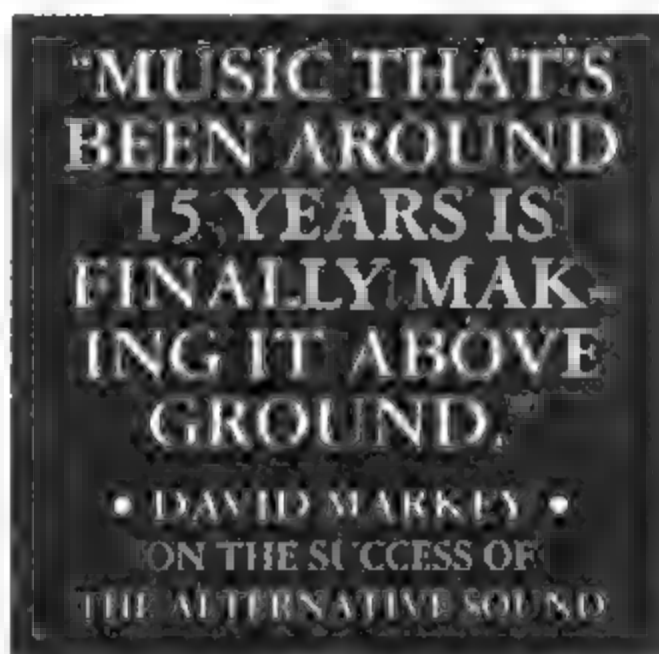
Coincidentally, with the long-standing practice of fans manufacturing illicit band paraphernalia, Markey, who himself once worked on the fanzine *We Got Power* ("the *National Lampoon* of hardcore magazines"), wasn't surprised to discover bootlegs of his barely finished feature. "A few weeks after we completed one of the final cuts there was a bootleg version of the very first rough on-line for sale on the street." Perhaps because he grew up making his own movies and music, the illegal dupings didn't faze the director. "It just depends on whose hands it falls into. Inherently, bootlegging has always been around. I think The Beatles did a lot of



their own official bootlegs. And Sonic Youth do their own bootlegs, too. It's just a part of rock 'n roll."

In many respects, the Super 8 format not only fits this do-it-yourself philosophy, but the alternative sound itself. "A lot of the graininess and weirdness that sometimes Super 8 can yield really seems to work well with this music," says Markey. And in a profession that prides itself in touring in vans when first starting out, the cost of the format also comes into significance. "Super 8 allowed me to work relatively inexpensively and shoot eight hours of film for reasonable amounts of money, which Sonic Youth initially put up. By the time we got through the end it was a bit more than six grand for film, processing and the video transfer. Sonic Youth was not gonna sit around and wait for the big machine," says Markey, in reference to Sonic's corporate backers at Geffen.

Which incidentally brings us to the role MTV plays in *1991*. For the most part, this movie is conspicuously free of the 24-hour music channel's slick-look. The director doesn't entirely concur, however: "I think that there's a certain MTV influence in it. If you compare the film to your average '70s concert film, this has much faster cuts, and in that regard, I think that's more reflective of this era. Television commercials are all fast cuts. That's all inspired by MTV. Shortening the attention span of the American down to 1.375 sound bites is pretty much where culture is at." And, as if to prove white male corporate media's dominating hold of popular



opinion, the host of MTV's *120 Minutes* (the network's "alternative music" show), Dave Kendall, appears in the movie interviewing Sonic Youth. "It's original intent was to be as far away from MTV as possible," admits Markey. "The MTV segment is one of the many ironic things in the film."

1991 revelation: Thurston thirstin' for more records.

And, irony is most evident in *1991*'s title. Markey remembers coming up with the moniker while sitting around the motel staving off jet-lag and watching Euro-MTV. "They had this segment on Mötley Crüe that showed them performing 'Anarchy in the U.K.' in this big European festival. And we were just taken back," he says. "I just kind of coined the phrase, 'Wow, 1991 is the year punk broke.' Which of course became prophetic when two months later Nirvana hit the world as hard as they did." Markey has plenty of other evidence to support his claims. "Guns 'N Roses are doing their punk rock record. The other day I heard Skid Row covering the Ramones on the radio. It's a point in time when music that's been around 15 years plus is finally making it to above ground places in a

really large, surreal sense."

Along with that, there develops a stand against such mass exposure. "This kind of music is something Sonic Youth, myself and other people have been really close to for over a decade, so yeah, there's a certain amount of tongue-in-cheek and cynicism implied," Markey says about his documentary. Still, he admits there's no denying the humor in suddenly being "hot." "Personally, it was a great source of amusement," the filmmaker says, holding back a grin.

Audiences, likewise, will be entertained by Sonic's ode to the Kevin "It was neat" Costner scene in Madonna's concert film *Truth or Dare* (Youth followers know that the band released an album of Blonde One covers under the

name Ciccone Youth in 1988). Cobain does the honors of impersonating Mr. *Dances With Wolves* while Gordon appropriately faux-pukes after the wretched comment.

So far as paying tribute, Markey was beside himself when it came to shooting the legendary Ramones. "The footage is really great because I had to sneak my camera to film them," he says. "They had all these guys around that were like, 'No cameras, no, photos.' I never thought that I'd ever get to film The Ramones."

Having been on both sides of the stage has helped Markey hone his filmmaking skills. "I was a drummer and I've always thought that being a drummer helped me edit," he muses. "I don't know if that makes any sense. It's just precise chops."

Making his essential L.A. music scene *Lovedolls* movies starring Redd Kross was also a learning experience. "I basically discovered that everything in the first *Lovedolls* film was true in my dealings with the corporate infrastructure," Markey says with a laugh. "It's kind of sick."

While his mid-'80s low-budget features still enjoy a steady underground following, Markey says, "I think the *Lovedolls* films have yet to reach the audience that I hope will always be

there for them." But don't expect to see the trilogy completed anytime soon. "I haven't really been stoked to do the third one," says the director. "I've said I would do it only if it was in 3-D."

Maybe with the success of 1991 Markey might afford a real budget for his next project. Of course, should this happen there will be accusations of "selling out." "I think we should destroy the bogus capitalist process that is destroying youth culture by mass-marketing and commercial paranoia behavior control," Moore says in the film. This statement not only confirms the average alternative music fan's mentality, but also echoes the criticism Sonic Youth themselves endured when they signed to DGC. Markey relates, "If you're dealing with the corporate structure—in theory



alone—it lends itself to certain amount of resentment and backlash. But when you think about it, all the original punk rock bands were on major labels—The Pistols, The Clash. In Sonic Youth's case, coming out of the independent music scene, there was just no other place for them to go. And they handled it very well. They were able to take it to the corporate structure and still maintain their individual identity."

Does Markey think grass-roots filmmaking will also get the same financial support alternative music is presently receiving? "It seems like a natural act that's spilling over to film," he says. "There's a lot of independent filmmakers that are being licensed to work within the structure of the system and still do what they want, people like Gus Van Sant, Gregg Araki."

When asked about his next movie, Markey answers, "I'm gonna make a grunge snuff film," before breaking up. "I was talking to Mudhoney (who have a non-performing appearance in 1991) on the phone and Mark [Arm, the lead singer] said he was actually willing to die in a film. So we'll see about getting that funded," he says smiling.

In the meantime, Markey has been directing music videos. His list of credits include FIREHOSE, Mudhoney, Gumball, Fudge Tunnel and others. "I hate music," he deadpans. "No, that's just my old man jadedness kicking in. I'm trying to piece together my own psycho-babble from years of notebook scribbles and put it all into one film."

On that note, mention of the rumored Guns 'N Roses movie arises. Does Markey have any advice to whoever makes the proposed feature? "Don't let Axl direct." **[TVQ]**

If 1991 doesn't play at a theatre near you (which is unlikely unless you live in a major city), wait for Geffen's video release later this year.

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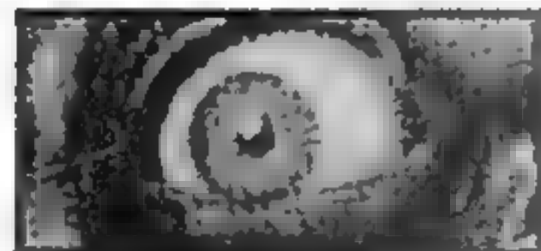
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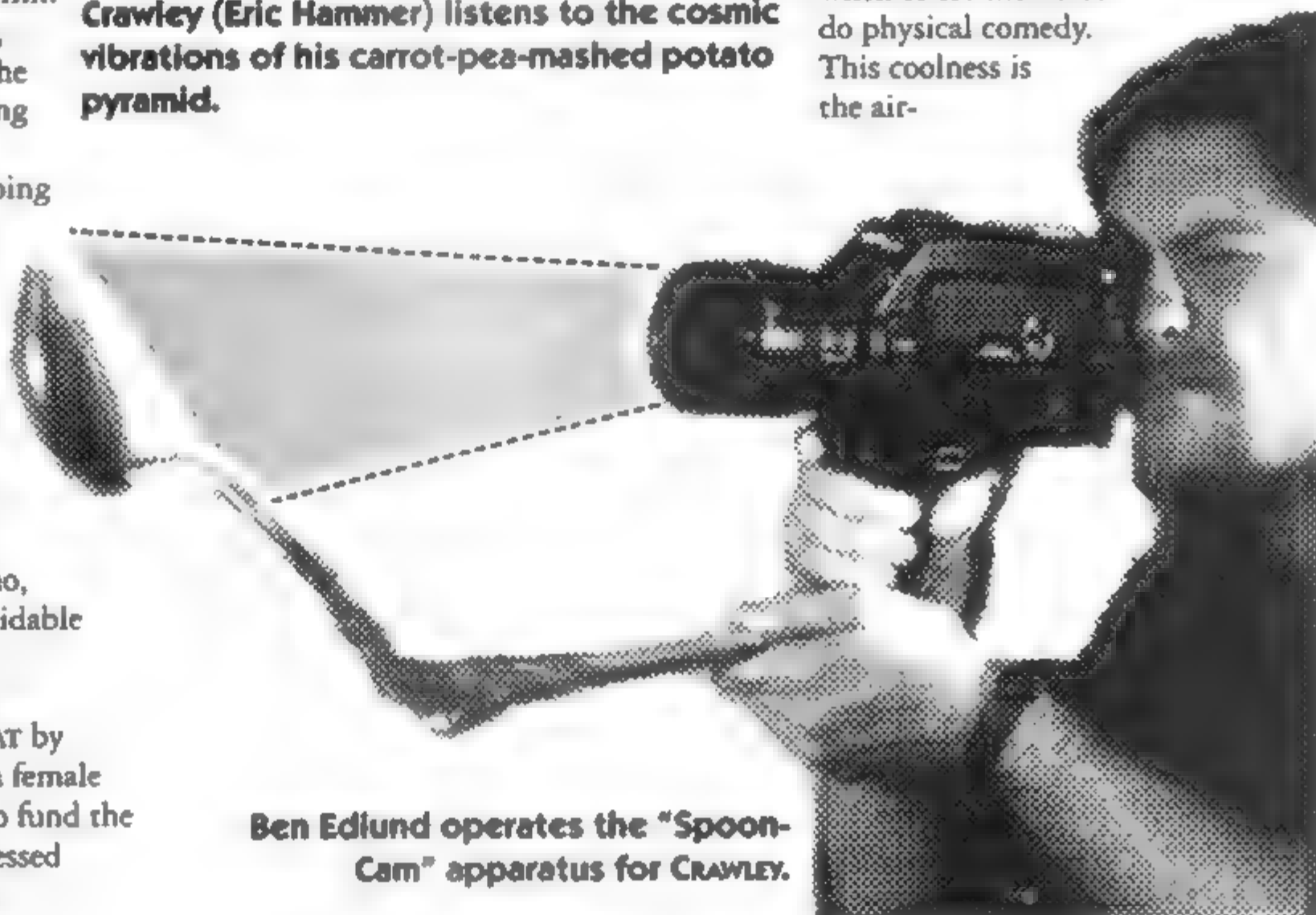
THERE IS ANOTHER side to the New York underground film scene, a new movement that shamelessly embraces the tools and structure of commercial films, but infuses them with educated, self-important precision in addition to the unmistakable mark of poverty. Clearly, they show the appropriate amount of contempt for the classic Hollywood paradigm, but they are hopelessly devoted to you the viewer, who has too long trudged the dreary fog-and-stool-filled forest of film. Blessed Elysium Productions, based in NYC, understands the importance of doing something new, but this group of filmmakers is interested in doing something good, something that they can care about—like the parents of an ugly child. The only difference is that they sell their ugly child for entertainment purposes.

The driving forces behind this pioneering company are three optimistic "auteurs" who, when moistened, can be formidable filmmakers. Lisa Houle, the company founder, started her relationship with FILM THREAT by advertising nude pictures of a female director for a cash donation to fund the Super 8 opus *Pussbucket*, Blessed Elysium's first feature, which



Crawley (Eric Hammer) listens to the cosmic vibrations of his carrot-pea-mashed potato pyramid.

incidentally took three years to complete. She maintains that it was a sociological experiment and part of her film's masterful publicity scheme. She performs a myriad of tasks on all her films (she trusts no one) from directing, producing, and editing, to wardrobe, music, and acting. The observant viewer will recognize her as the Evil Queen in Blessed Elysium's first film, *Not Farewell Sweet Flesb*. As a director, Lisa Houle holds a tight set of reins, but knows when to let the horse do physical comedy. This coolness is the air-



Ben Edlund operates the "Spoon-Cam" apparatus for CRAWLEY.



Director Lisa Houle captures the mayhem on celluloid.

conditioning to a sometimes overheated machine. Some of the heat radiates from the big pants of Eric Hammer, who was drafted into Blessed Elysium because of his undeniable talents and almost hairless body. Mean-spirited and disagreeable, Eric can't make new friends, so he must play BE's reindeer games of filmmaking. Hammer is an integral member of the creative team, almost single-handedly scoring *Pussbucket*, as well as acting in all Blessed Elysium Productions. He is now preparing for the starring role in *Crawley*, the group's latest feature. Hammer's character *Crawley* is a messianic obsessive compulsive. To prepare for this role, Eric scratched at the inflamed and tender scars of his childhood, reaching into his shirt and tugging at the growing nodes (could be cancer) in his armpits and still lower, to spread wide his now-exposed scrotal sac. Squeezing his glassy and fine haired man-ness, he slowly becomes ready to straddle the tub and sink, spread eagle to pound out *Crawley's* manifesto in rough pulls and strokes, to shower the world with the Blessed Elysium idea of film. *Crawley* is a dark comedy which draws heavily on the childhood fears of cowriters Ben Edlund and Hammer—fears ranging from Killer Bees to the inevitability of their parents' spontaneous combustion. Edlund is the author and illustrator of the cult comic book *The Tick* and responsible for the shameless merchandising empire based on that property. Edlund and Hammer started working together in 1986 when they joined forces to design the miniature effects sequences for *Pussbucket*. This was a particular challenge, as the film's special effects budget was under eight dollars.

Lisa Houle will direct *Crawley*, which is slated to begin shooting later this summer. **[HYG]**

To contact Blessed Elysium about this or any of their other projects, please write to:
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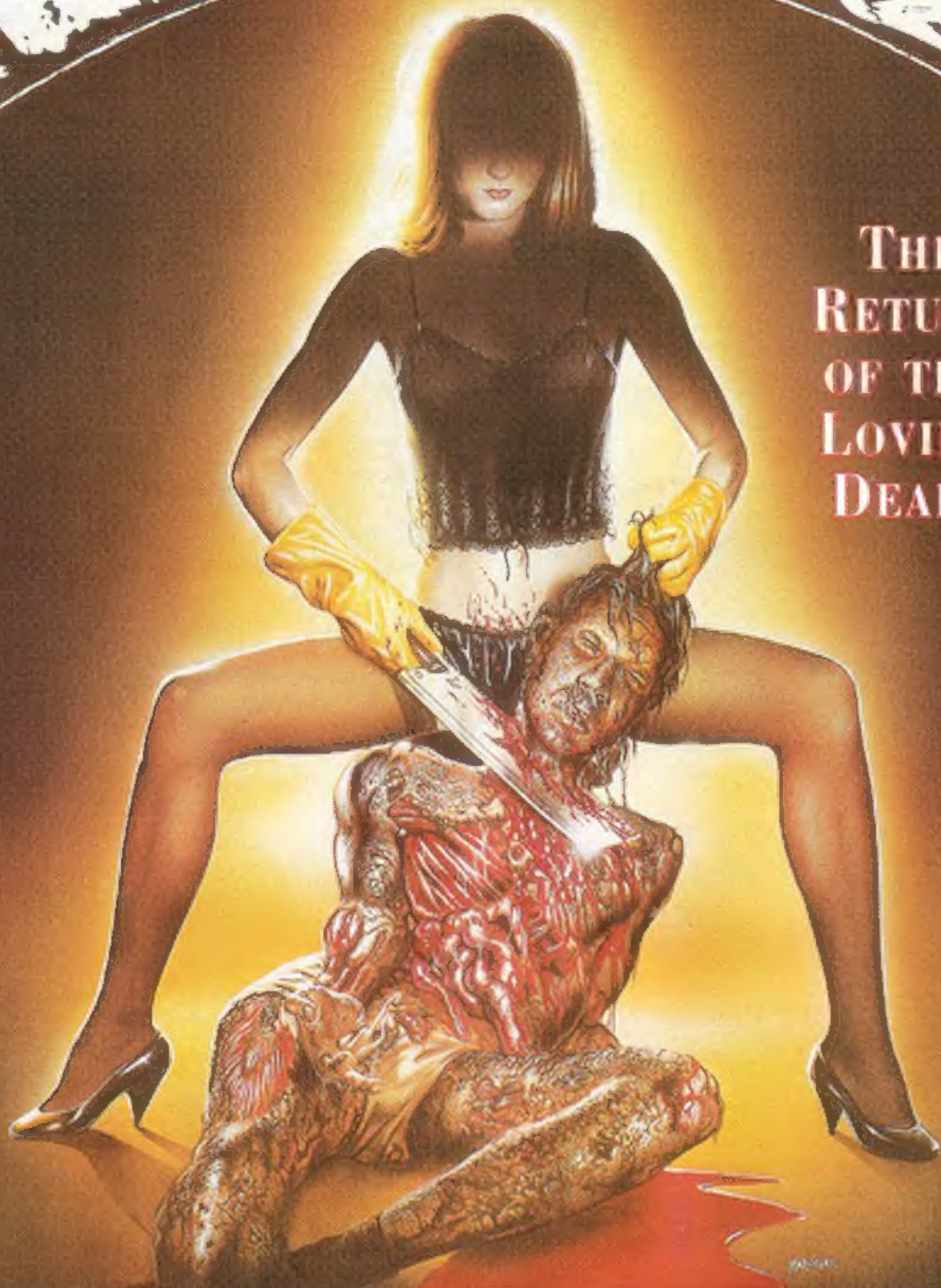
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